HEAVY METAL

#266
THE WORLD'S GREATEST ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE

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The apocalyptic adventure unfolds
ENKI BILAL

THE PUGILIST
Vengeance served cold
GREG FOLLENDER

GALLERY
DAVE SEELEY

SPACE RATS
Intergalactic extermination
GONZALO RUGGIERI

FATE
Cosmic espionage
HOMERO RIOS
JOE SANCHEZ

THE AGE
The more things change...
TAYYAR OZKAN

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266

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FRONT COVER

DAVE SEELEY

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PRETTY, LIKE A PINK ROSE, HA, HA...

BUT BE CAREFUL, MY FRIEND... "INDIVIDUALS MEET ONLY TO COLLIDE; AND EACH, BEARING HIS TORN ENTRAILS IN HIS HANDS, ACCUSES THE OTHER — WHO IS GATHERING UP HIS OWN..." GUSTAVE FLAUBERT...

A PHILOSOPHER.

... OBVIOUSLY IT'S MUCH TOO EARLY TO UNDERESTIMATE THIS BLOODY COUP ... WIDESPREAD PANIC IS COMING WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY DUE TO THE DEVALUATION OF CURRENCY. OWLES INDUSTRIES AND ITS EXECUTIVES WERE TAKEN TO COURT. THREE PRIVATE AIRCRAFT WERE STOLEN BY THEIR PILOTS.
WE LEFT OUR LOCATION BY SEA. THOSE WHO WERE IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME ORGANIZED AS BEST THEY COULD WITH THE SOLE PURPOSE OF MAKING STRAIT 17 ... S 14 AND S 9 WERE TOO DANGEROUS, AND TOO FAR AWAY, REGARDLESS ... I WAS RECOVERING WITH MY HUSBAND, WHICH WAS NO PICNIC, EVEN THOUGH WE WERE ARMED WITH AMENITIES LIKE THE YACHT AND MINI-UNIVERSAL ROBOT... AND OF COURSE OUR PACKS, ALTHOUGH WE HAD NEVER DARED TO TEST THEM. THE IDEA OF NEVER BEING ABLE TO RETURN ... OF REMAINING DOLPHINS FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES ... GAVE US COLD FEET.

ANIMAL'Z

PART 5

... AT LEAST I KNOW THAT THE PACK WORKS... THANKS TO YOU...

IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ME... I DON'T INTERFERE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S BUSINESS, EVER.

By Enki BILAL

Very kind of you to provide for me, Pozzano... although the arsenal at your disposal displays more than a simple desire for self-defense... probably trafficking weapons or running a currency exchange...

Pinch Me detects signs of intense radioactivity as we approach the Strait.

A shot of preventive potassium. I trust it works... I have no choice.

A sudden drop in the outside temperature... in the middle of the Strait lies a submarine trapped in a glacier.

CUTTING MACHINES, PINCH ME! ...

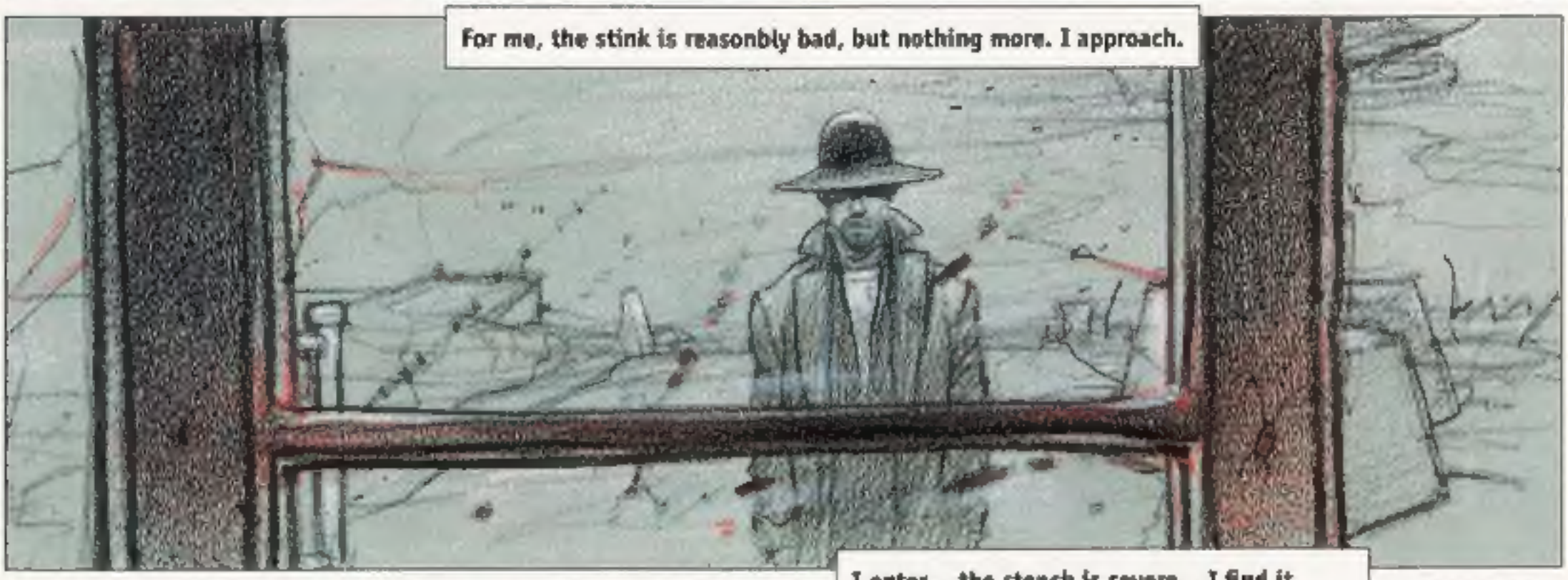
Nuclear submarine, European colors, surely being emptied of its uranium...

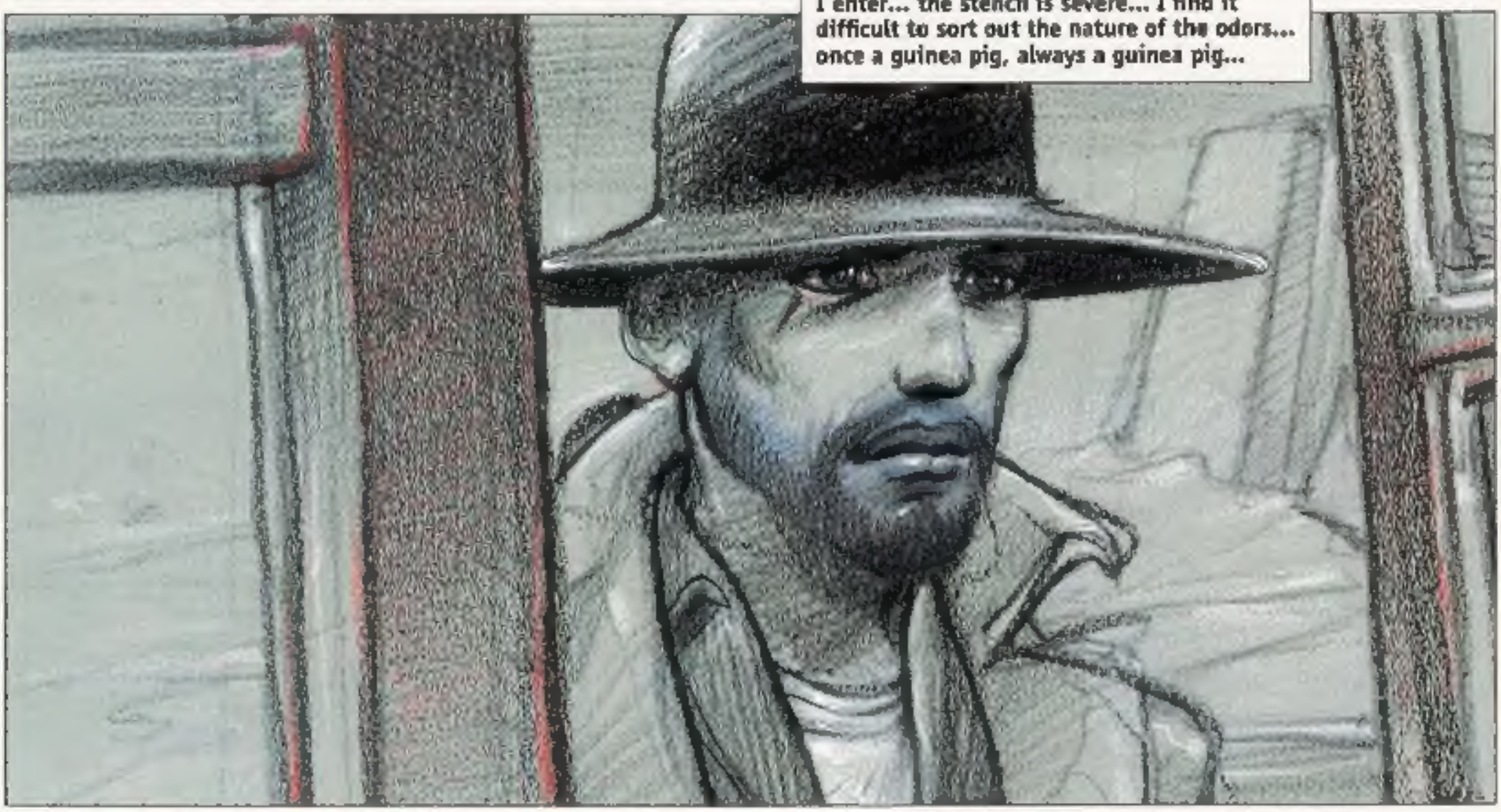
... there's floating mines everywhere. I'm in deep shit.

It remains to be seen just how deep. I decide to leave at nightfall.

Pinch Me guards the boat...

LOUNGE-BAR. This is where it happened. My nose tells me Animal'z. The odor is repulsive and resists the cold air. It would gag any normal human being...
LOUNGE
BAR


For me, the stink is reasonbly bad, but nothing more. I approach.


I enter... the stench is severe... I find it difficult to sort out the nature of the odors... once a guinea pig, always a guinea pig...

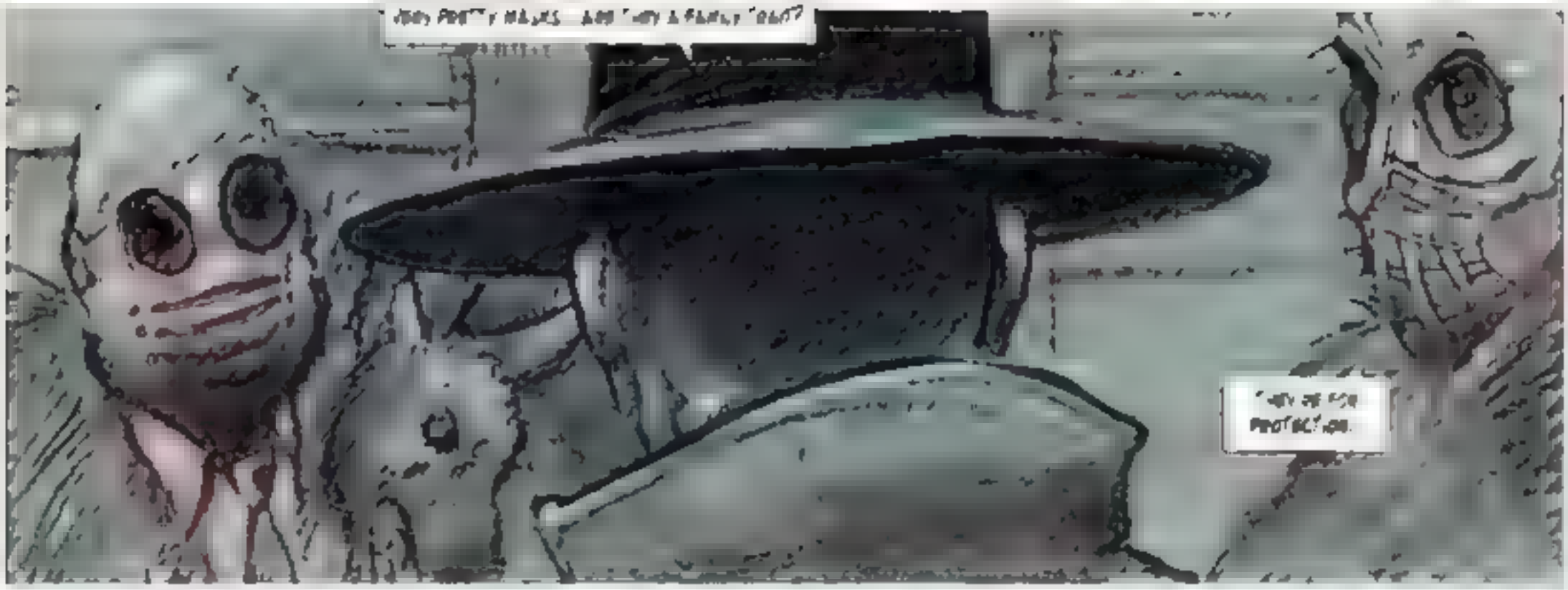
THIS IS A PRIVATE AREA. FAMILY PROPERTY!

!?

" MAN ON ZEBRA-HORSE, WHO HAS TOLD ME NOTHING ABOUT HIMSELF. NOT EVEN HIS NAME, WATCHES HIS BACK... "

WELL THEN, WHAT ARE YOU OBSESSING OVER NOW ? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR ?

THE SECRET FOR TRAVELING IN A MORE COMFORTABLE MANNER. DOSTOEVSKY SAID, "POLITELY LISTEN TO THE LIES OF OTHERS AND BELIEVE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE " ... YOU DESERVE BETTER THAN FOR ME TO LIE TO YOU


DO NOT REVERSE OUR ROLES WE'RE ASKING THE QUESTIONS HERE

YOU LIKE HUMAN FLESH?

I MUST POINT OUT THAT SOME OF MY ABILITIES ARE ALSO BEYOND COMMONLY ACCEPTED NORMS...

A ROUNDABOUT WAY OF SAYING THAT YOU'RE BEING USED AS A GUINEA PIG FOR YOUR FATHER'S MENAGLE, then"?

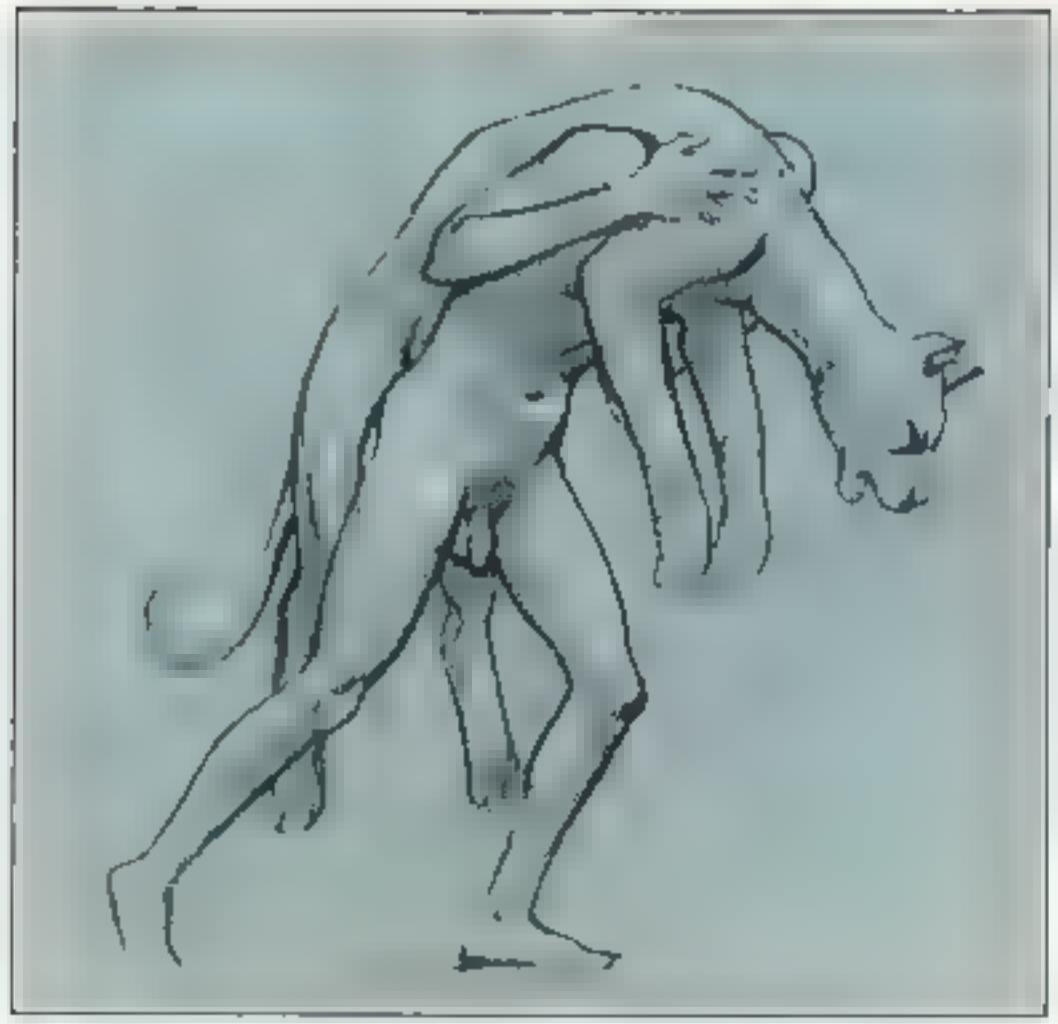
WHAT IS A "MENAGLE"?

A TWISTED MIND FROM THE DISTANT PAST BUT ONE THAT IS STILL ENRAGED...

PLEASE NOTE TWO THINGS, MR. OUTSIDE... FIRST, MY FATHER IS NOT MY FATHER... I MEAN BIOLOGICALLY... AND SECOND, I FORBID YOU TO PASS JUDGMENT ON HIM OR ANYONE OR ANYTHING NEAR HIM. DO I MAKE MYSELF PERFECTLY CLEAR?

CRYSTAL CLEAR! NOT - I SEE JUST WHO

WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE POTASSIUM IODIDE. THE STRAIT IS CONTAMINATED



We're dealing with a family of degenerates, cracked to the last degree ... Ever since my fucking childhood, I've had to deal with a lot of monsters, but none were as twisted as this lot ...

PINCH ME, I'LL NEED YOUR SERVICES... I'VE SEEN THREE, BUT FROM THE SMELL I BELIEVE THERE ARE MORE... YOU'RE GOING TO CHECK IT OUT, OKAY?

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, SIR.

DISCREETLY

THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, SIR.

I suddenly realize that no one has ever called me "sir" before ...

And probably won't ever again. I'm all alone...

the Pugilist

CREATED ‡ WRITTEN ‡ ILLUSTRATED BY
GREG-MICHAEL FOLLENDER
INKS BY ‡ RICK J. BRYANT
LETTERS BY WILSON RAMOS ‡ JR

EVEN NOW IT'S DIFFICULT TO KNOW HOW MUCH OF WHAT I REMEMBER ACTUALLY COMES FROM ME...OR HIM.

OF COURSE, IT'S BECOME MUCH CLEARER SINCE THEN THE WAY IT ALL FITS TOGETHER BUT AT THE TIME, I WAS LOST.. THE DREAMS MADE NO SENSE I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THE VOICES WERE TRYING TO TELL ME

I WASN'T USED TO THINKING LIKE THAT... I LIVED BY INSTINCT. BEFORE I MET HIM, MY LIFE WAS SIMPLY ONE HORROR STACKED UPON ANOTHER I WAS AN OBJECT TO BE BOUGHT OR SOLD

I THOUGHT IT COULDN'T POSSIBLY GET WORSE ..

..AND IT WAS JUST AS I REALIZED I WAS MISTAKEN THAT HE CAME INTO MY LIFE

BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF, YOU SEE ..

IT ALL BEGINS WITH THE GIRL IN THE GROUND.

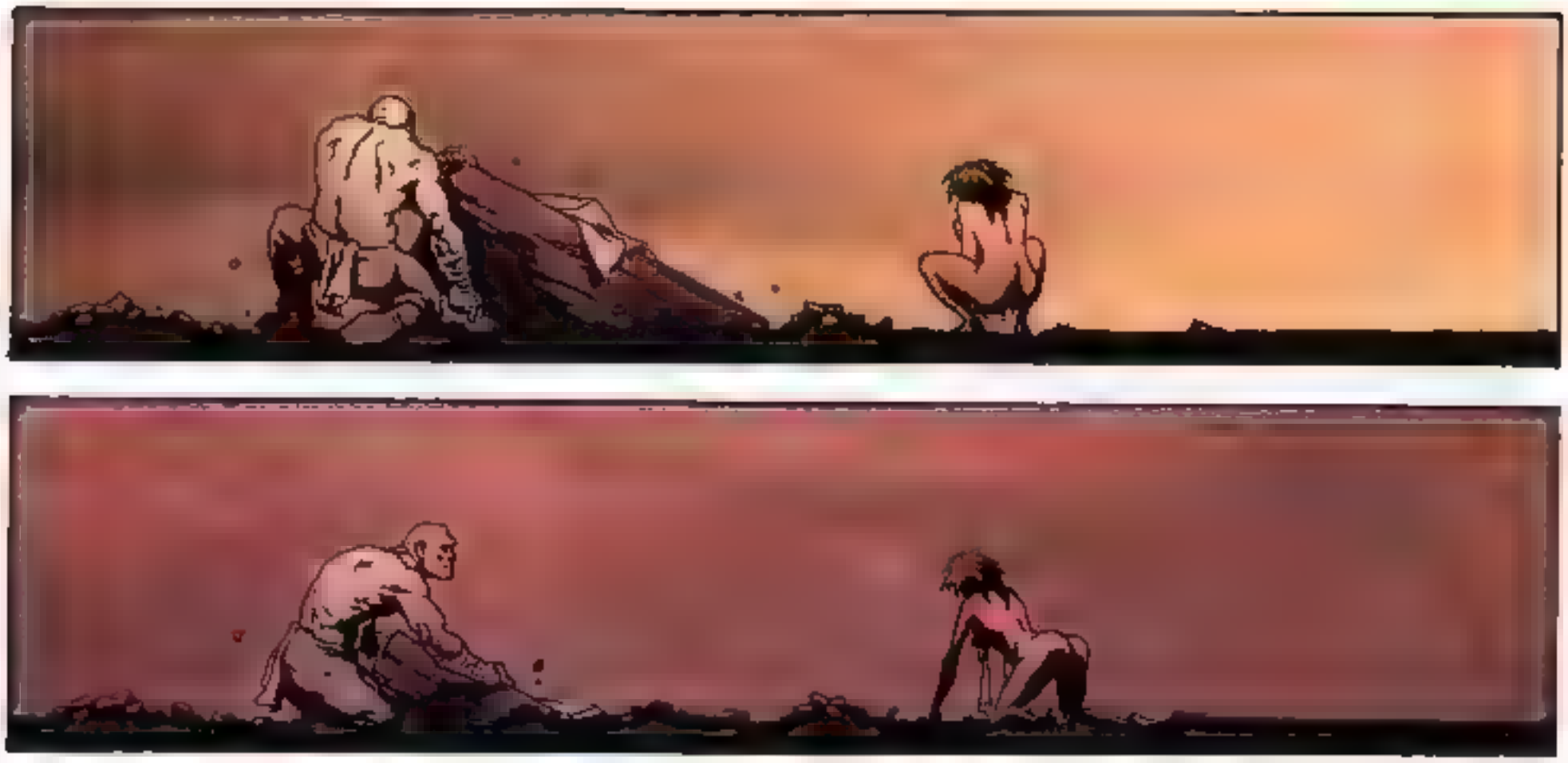
EVEN BEFORE GREY AND THE OLD MAN...IT ALL REALLY STARTS WITH HER.

YOU SEE, THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN HER STORY.

STILL, IT FALLS TO ME TO TRY AND EXPLAIN IT ALL.

I CAN STILL REMEMBER MOST OF IT AS CLEARLY AS IF IT WERE YESTERDAY.

THE IN-BETWEEN MOMENTS... THE PARTS I COULDN'T KNOW... HE MUST HAVE FILLED IN FOR ME SOMEHOW. THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING FOR SURE



BUT THIS

...IS HOW IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED...

HOW MANY TIMES HAS SHE CALLED TODAY?

THAT WAS THE 6TH TIME, SIR.

MY SISTER BREAKS OUR TRUCE BECAUSE OF HER DAUGHTER

SHE IS DESPERATE. VERY WELL, CONALL. TELL HER I HAVE AGENTS ON IT AT ALL TIMES.

I HAVE NO DELUSIONS THAT SHE WILL BE SATISFIED WITH THAT ANSWER...

...BUT TELL HER NONETHELESS, VERENA HAS NEVER QUITE TRUSTED ME

YOUR OWN SISTER, SIR... WHY?

I WAS ALWAYS, FASCINATED...WITH HER IN MY YOUTH.

THIS FOSTERED A STRANGE DISTRUST IN HER. SHE HAS ALWAYS SUSPECTED THAT I LOOKED UPON HER AS A SPECIMEN UNDER THE LENS.

YES...OUR CHILDHOOD...A BOOK THAT *'ER LASST SICH NICHT LESEN'*...

HOW MUCH DOES YOUR SISTER ACTUALLY KNOW REGARDING YOUR NIECE'S RECENT VISIT?

WHEN SHE ARRIVED AT MY DOORSTEP, BEGGING ME FOR AN OPPORTUNITY. I INITIALLY RESISTED.

SHE MUST HAVE HEARD OF ME FROM HER MOTHER, NO DOUBT. .TOLD OF MY "INFLUENCE" IN THE LOCAL FILM INDUSTRY AND SOUGHT ME OUT.

YOU SEE, HER DAUGHTER HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MALCONTENT... PRONE TO WANDERING.

SHE KNOWS NOTHING... SHE SUSPECTS THE WORST

RESISTED, SIR. .HELPING YOUR OWN NIECE?

CONALL, YOU KNOW WELL WHAT MY BUSINESS HAS BECOME

I AM NO MERCHANT OF GLAMOUR.

THE STUDIOS I NOW EMPLOY NO LONGER OFFER THOSE PANDERING 60 MINUTE MELODRAMAS OF YESTERYEAR.

REGARDLESS OF MY EFFORTS TO DISSUADE HER, SHE WAS INSISTENT ON PURSUING THIS COURSE...

NO MATTER WHAT UNSAVORY ELEMENTS SHE MIGHT ENCOUNTER OR ENDURE ALONG THE PATH TO SUCCESS.

SUCCESS? DID SHE REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT SUCCESS IN YOUR STUDIOS ENTAILED, SIR?

IS THIS WHEN YOU INTRODUCED HER TO THE DIRECTOR?

YES.. I EVENTUALLY RELENTED TO HER INSISTENT BADGERING AND SET UP A MEETING WITH ONE OF THE YOUNG HAWKS IN THE STUDIO STABLE, HERR FLEISCHMANN.

AS FAR AS THE ROLE'S "RESPONSIBILITIES" WERE CONCERNED, MY NIECE SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS REQUIRED OF HER. SHE WENT IN WITH OPEN EYES.

.. HER AMBITIONS BEYOND THAT I COULD NOT SURMISE.

EXCUSE ME, SIR. I'VE JUST BEEN INFORMED THAT THE AGENT YOU REQUESTED IS WAITING DOWNSTAIRS.

VERY WELL.. SEND HIM UP.

SIR. GOING BACK TO MY EARLIER QUESTION.

DIDN'T YOU REALIZE THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF PAIRING YOUR NIECE WITH A DIRECTOR OF FLEISCHMANN'S "NOTORIETY"?

I DID. BUT HAD I NOT HELPED HER MYSELF, SHE WOULD HAVE EVENTUALLY FOUND SOMEONE ELSE LIKE HIM.

..OR WORSE. ON HER OWN.

AT LEAST WITH HER IN MY OWN STUDIO, I WOULD HAVE A MODICUM OF CONTROL OVER THE SITUATION.

AT WHAT POINT DID YOU LOSE CONTROL OF THE BOTH OF THEM, SIR?

IT IS UNUSUAL TO SEE SUCH DISSENSION OCCUR FROM WITHIN THE COMPANY.

THERE WAS NO ONE MOMENT...

PERHAPS I AFFORDED FLEISCHMANN TOO MANY LIBERTIES. HIS FILMS WERE OF SUCH RARE QUALITY THAT I OVERLOOKED HIS EARLY TRANSGRESSIONS. LATER, I DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD PROMISED MY NIECE EVEN MORE THAN I HAD OFFERED

ONCE HE HAD ENSNARED HER, HE BEGAN TO MAKE DEMANDS...

IN THE BEGINNING. IT WAS ONLY MORE MONEY. NOW HE THREATENS TO EXPOSE AND PUBLICIZE THE "LESS MARKETABLE" FILMS MY STUDIO FUNDS. AND HE HOLDS MY NIECE AS CAPTIVE COLLATERAL.

THROUGH BLACKMAIL, HE HOPES TO PROFIT AT MY EXPENSE AND BROKER A CRUDE RELEASE FROM OUR CONTRACT. I CANNOT ALLOW IT.

AS FOR MY NIECE, I WON'T VENTURE TO GUESS WHAT HER TRUE INVOLVEMENT IN THIS FIASCO MIGHT BE

ABOUT THE AGENT, SIR. WOULDN'T IT MAKE MORE SENSE TO SEND IN AN EXTRACTION TEAM?

SENDING ONLY ONE MAN SEEMS... RISKY.

AH CONALL, MY FRIEND. I'M NOT SENDING ANY ORDINARY OPERATIVE.

HE IS A MAN OF FEW WORDS, AND EVEN LESS COMPASSION

THERE WILL BE NO COUNTER-OFFERS, NO WITNESSES. NOTHING LESS THAN THE COMPLETE STERILIZATION OF THIS INDIGNITY WILL STAND

I WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH THIS COMMON MONGREL. THIS MAN IS MY EMISSARY.

AND HE WILL DELIVER UNTO ME.

THAT WHICH IS MINE

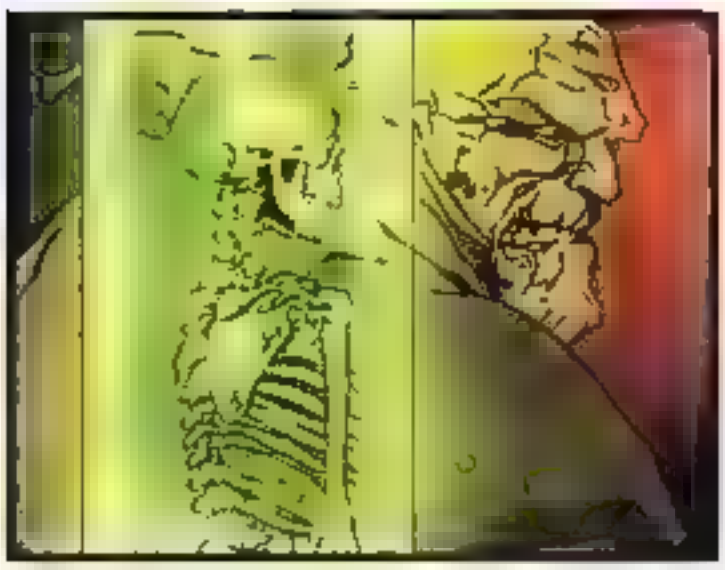
AND IF HE FAILS?

WHAT WILL YOU DO THEN, SIR?

HE WILL NOT FAIL, CONALL. I WILL BE SENDING YOU AFTER HIM TO ENSURE THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN.

I SEE. HE'S HERE.

LEAD HIM IN THEN... I'LL LET HERR FLEISCHMANN KNOW THAT OUR AGENT WILL SOON BE ON HIS WAY.



THERE.. HE HAS BEEN NOTIFIED

SIR. .HE WON'T COME ANY FURTHER. HE'S JUST STANDING THERE IN THE [redacted]

THAT IS HIS WAY, CONALL. AS LONG AS HE HAS SERVED THIS HOUSE, HE HAS NEVER GONE BEYOND THAT POINT.

ONE OF THE MANY STRANGE PRECAUTIONS MY GRANDFATHER MUST HAVE TAKEN TO PROTECT THIS FAMILY.

YOUR GRANDFATHER, SIR. .BUT THAT WOULD MAKE HIM-

SILENCE!

THERE ARE THINGS AT WORK HERE BEYOND YOUR UNDERSTANDING

SHATTERED

THE STUDIO... HERE IS WHERE IT STARTED FOR ME...

JOHANN. HEINRICH'S MAN IS HERE ALONE WITH A SUITCASE.

GOOD. DON'T LET HIM IN UNTIL I [redacted] TO ASSIST YOU..

I DON'T WANT ANY SURPRISES.

TSCHULDIGUNG. JOHANN. THE GIRLS. YOU NEED TO CHOOSE.

OF COURSE

IT WAS BUSINESS AS USUAL UP TO THAT POINT. AN EASY BUCK. I JUST SHOWED UP, SNORTED SOME COURAGE, AND PUT ON THE COSTUME. THEN IT GOT WEIRD. NO TALKING ON SET. NO CALLS. IT FELT COLD AS A MEAT-LOCKER IN THERE.

FOREIGN CREW COULDN'T UNDERSTAND MOST OF WHAT THEY SAID. I JUST KEPT QUIET AND TRIED NOT TO STARE AT THE OTHER "TALENT". I DIDN'T SAY TWO WORDS TO THE OTHER GIRL DRESSED LIKE ME.

KEPT IT PROFESSIONAL. I REGRET THAT NOW. I REGRET LOTS OF THINGS NOW.

AHH. THIS ONE WILL DO NICELY FOR THE CLOSE-UPS. FACE IS ALL SHE HAS.

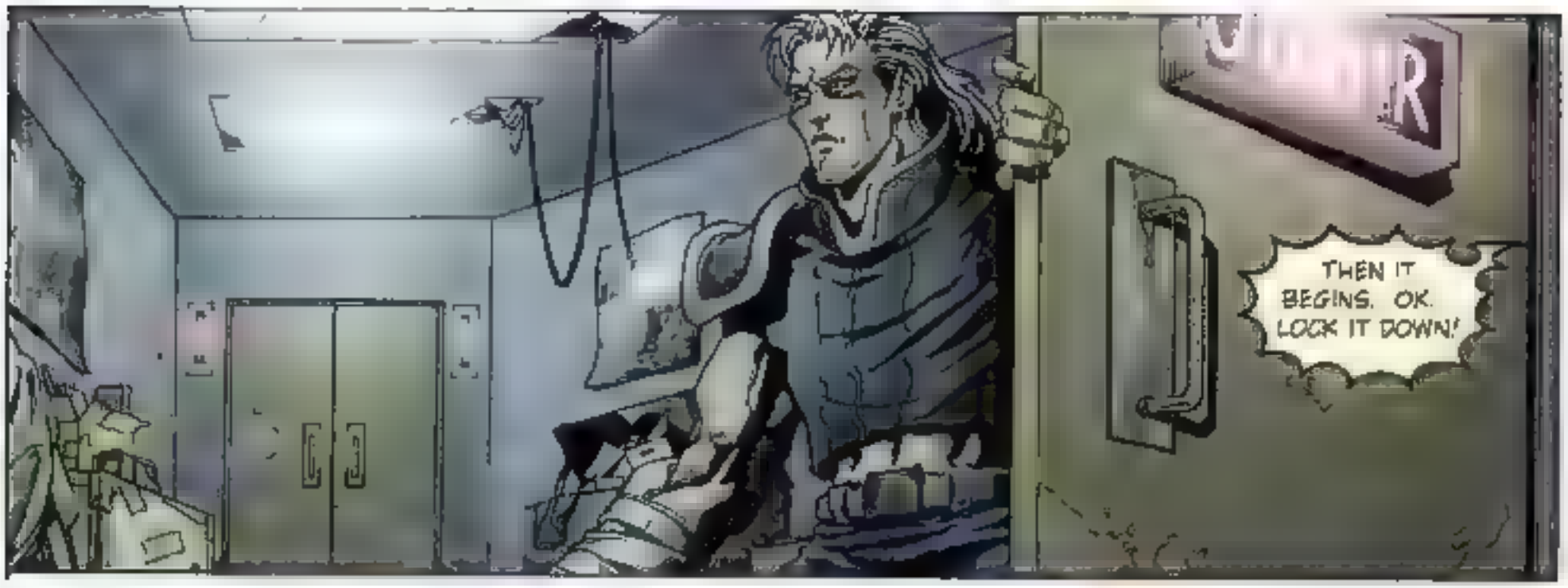
AND JUST LIKE THAT...BOTH OUR LIVES CHANGED IN A SINGLE INSTANT.

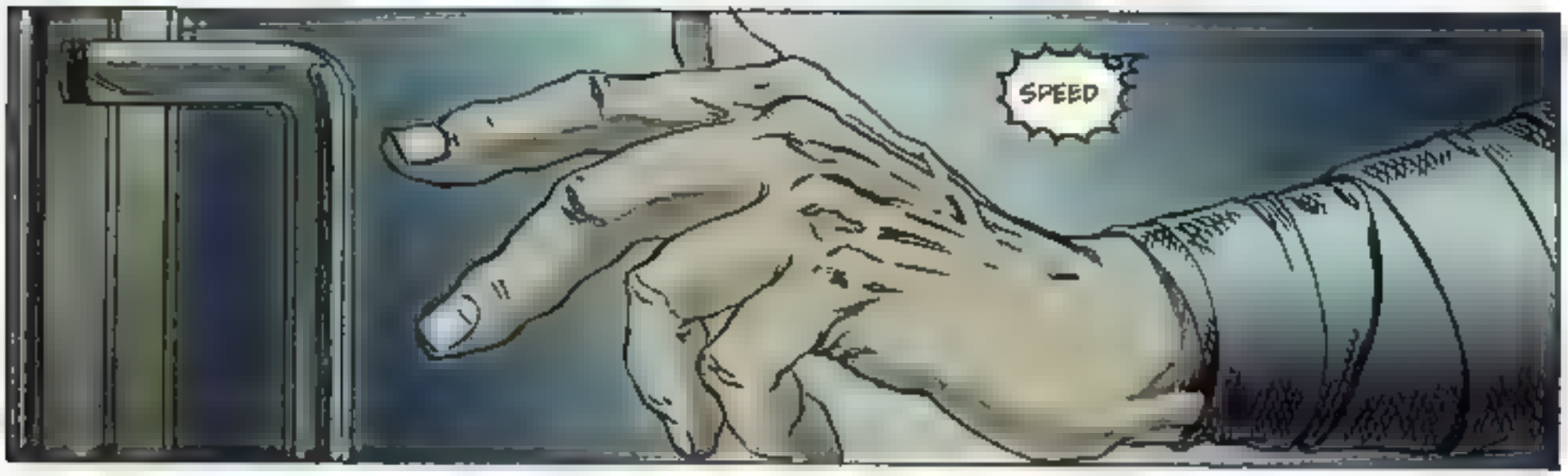
THE OTHER WE WILL USE FOR COVERAGE. TOUCH UP SHOTS AND SUCH. HER KIND IS GOOD FOR NOTHING ELSE. TAKE HER AWAY UNTIL THEN.

AND NOW- EVERYONE TO THEIR POSITIONS! PREP HERR EISENVATER.

RAY... GO COUNT THE MONEY WITH JURGIS. MAKE SURE EVERY CREDIT IS ACCOUNTED FOR.

JAWOHL. JOHANN!


THEN IT BEGINS. OK. LOCK IT DOWN!


SPEED

AAAND ACTION!

CUE HERR EISENVATER.

YES.. THATS IT LIKE THAT.

DO IT LET THEM SEE.

ZOOM IN CLOSE, HANS MAKE SURE YOU GET THE EYES

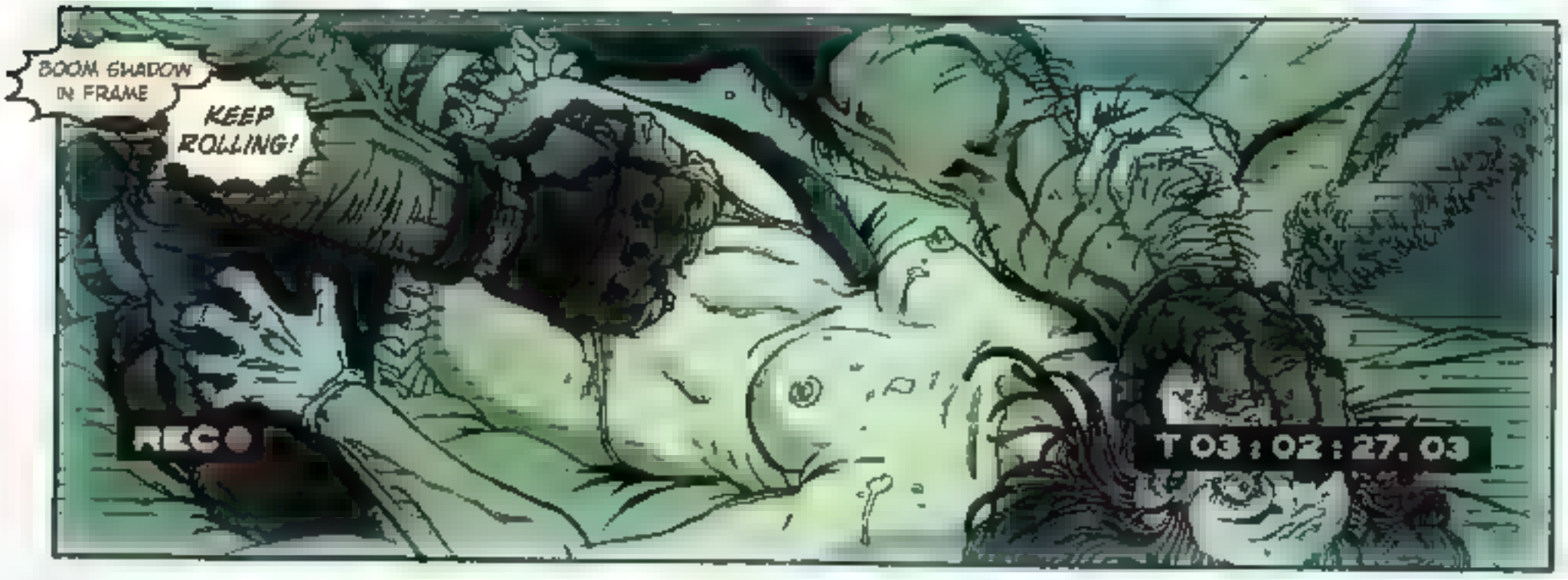
REC

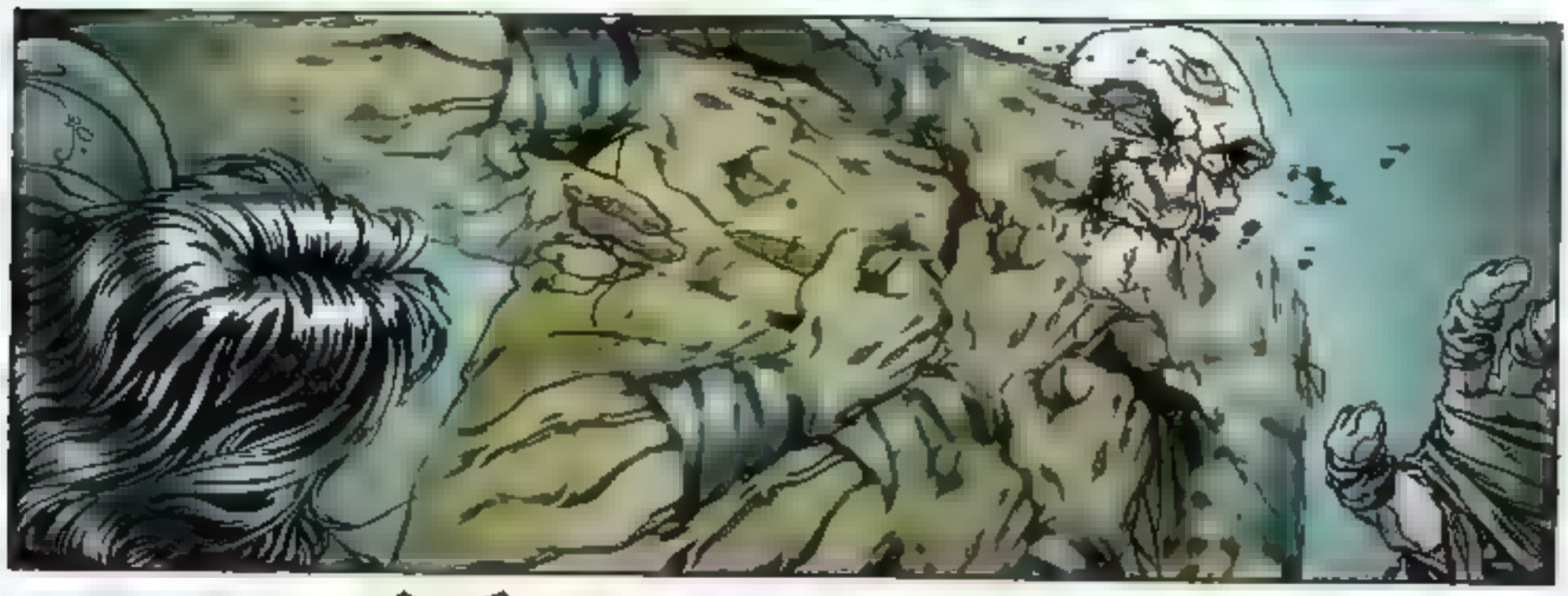
T 02 : 47 : 30. 09

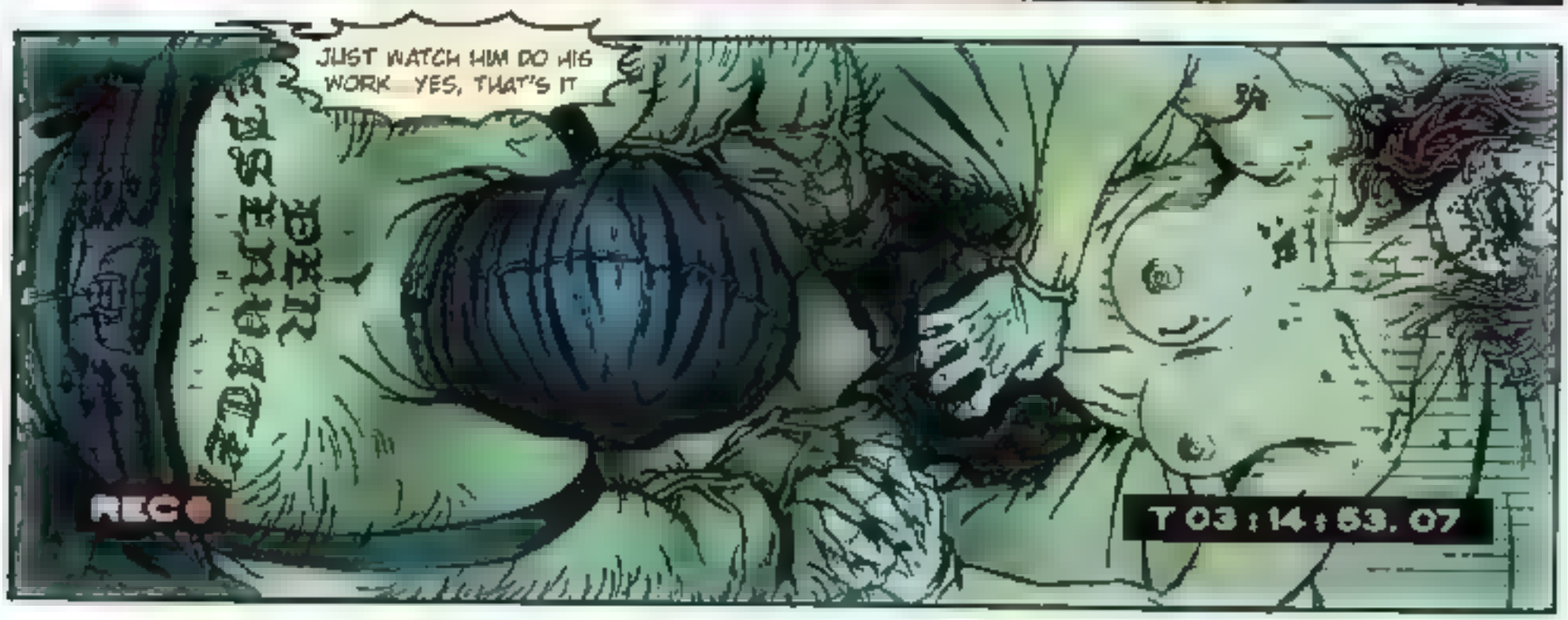
YES!!! SHOW NO REGARD.

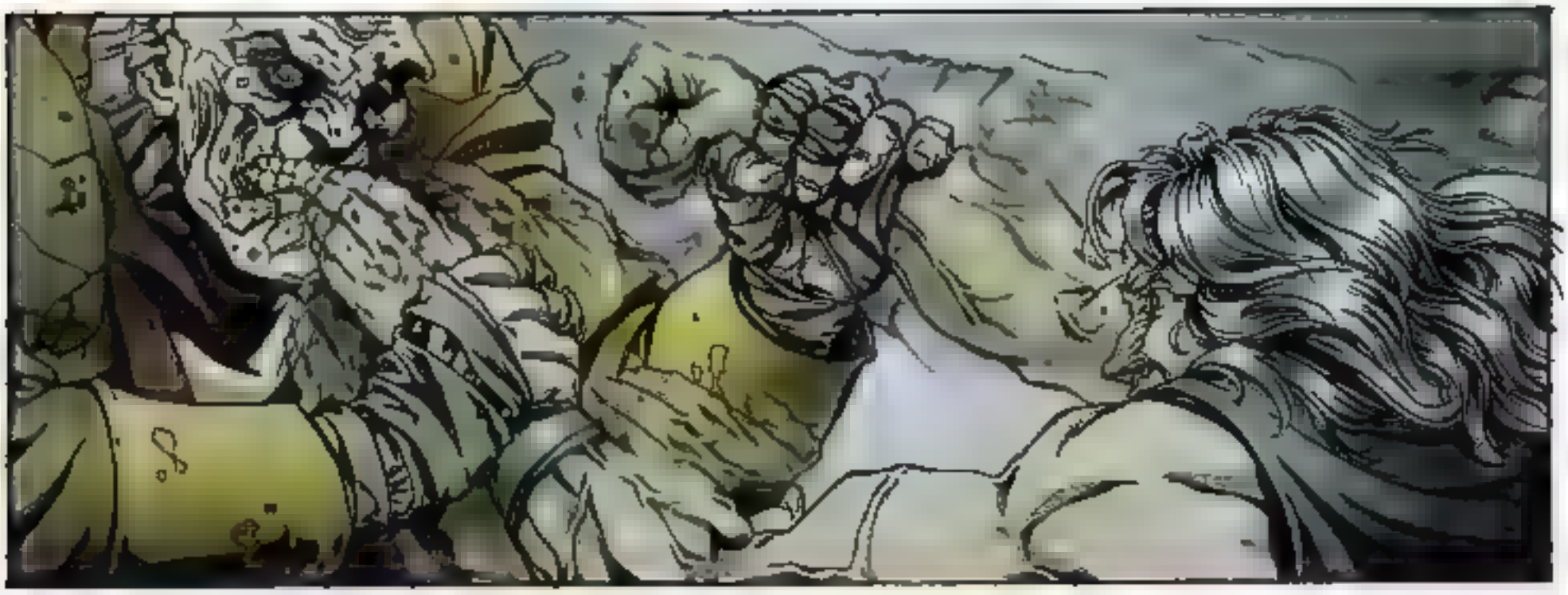
REC

T 02 : 68 : 39. 05

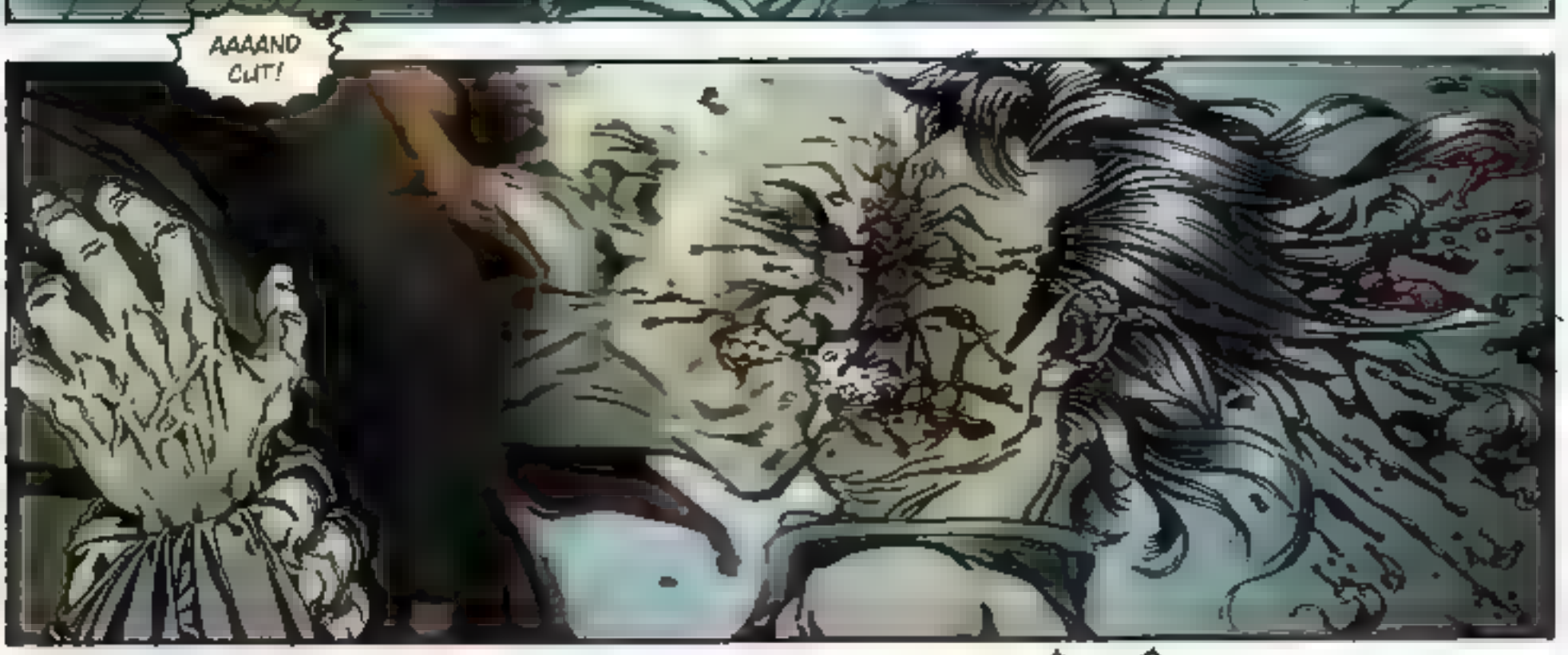

BOOM SHADOW IN FRAME
KEEP ROLLING!
REC
T 03:02:27.03




JUST WATCH HIM DO HIS WORK... YES, THAT'S IT
DER PSEUDO
REC
T 03:14:53.07



DON'T HOLD BACK!
LET US SEE IF THAT IMPOTENT OLD GARGOYLE'S HEART CAN TAKE THIS!
REC
T 03 : 19 : 23. 06


AAAAND CUT!

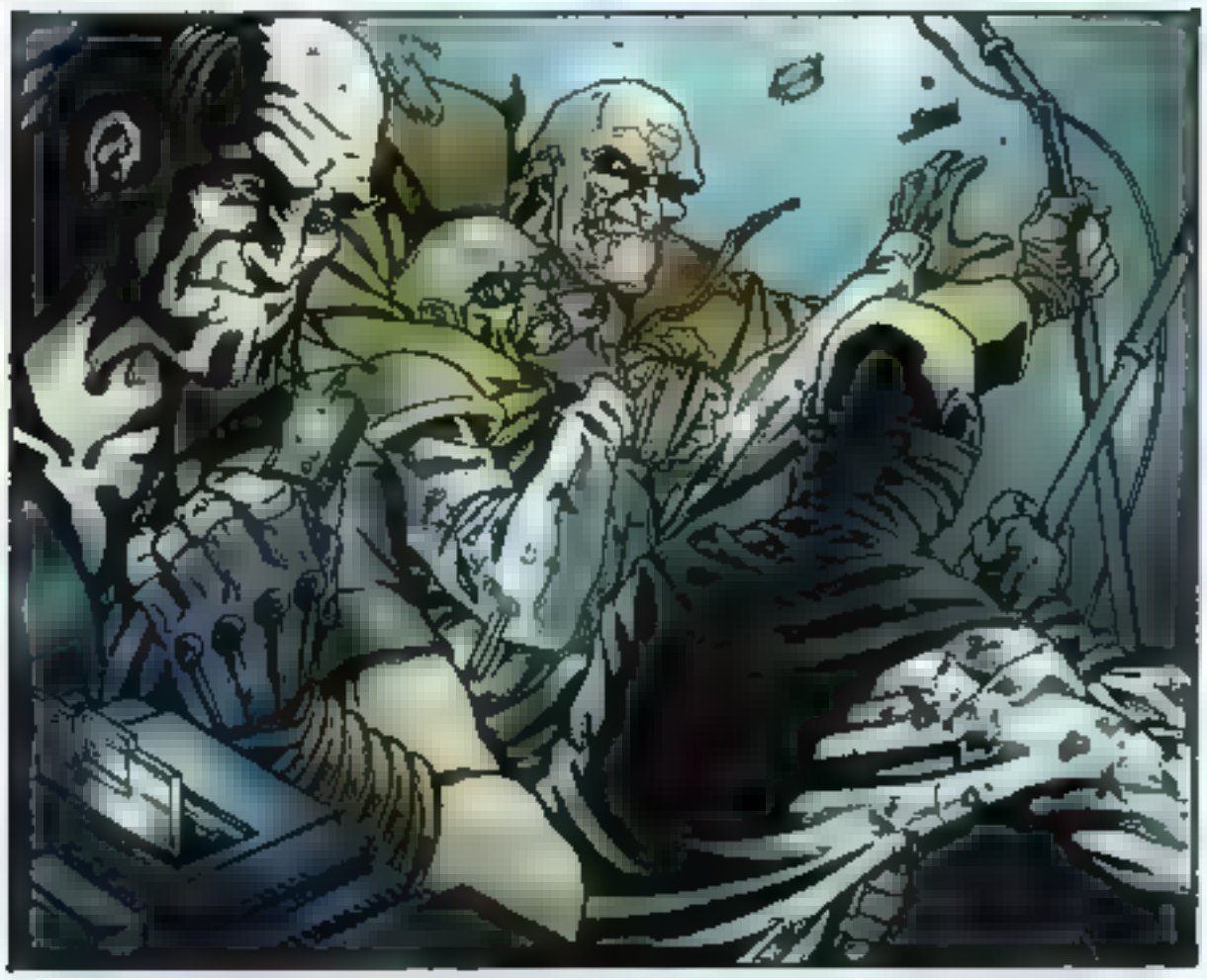
MAGNIFICENT
OK GERTRUD.. BRING IN THE OTHER ONE LETS GET THE COVERAGE SHOTS WHILE HE'S STILL HOT
HURRY NOW!
REC
T 03 : 20 : 43. 02

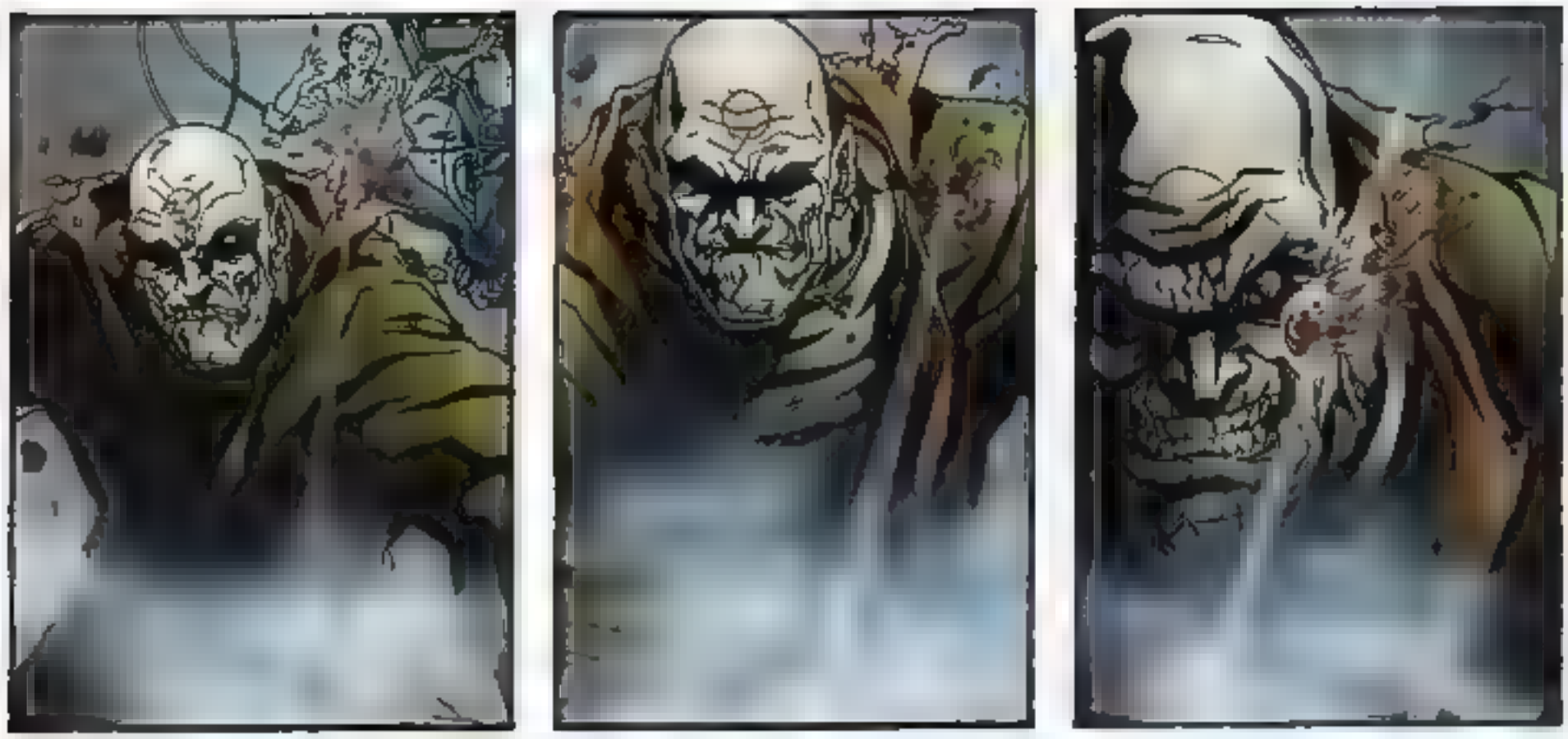
DON'T BE SHY NOW. YOU'RE GOING TO BE A STAR.

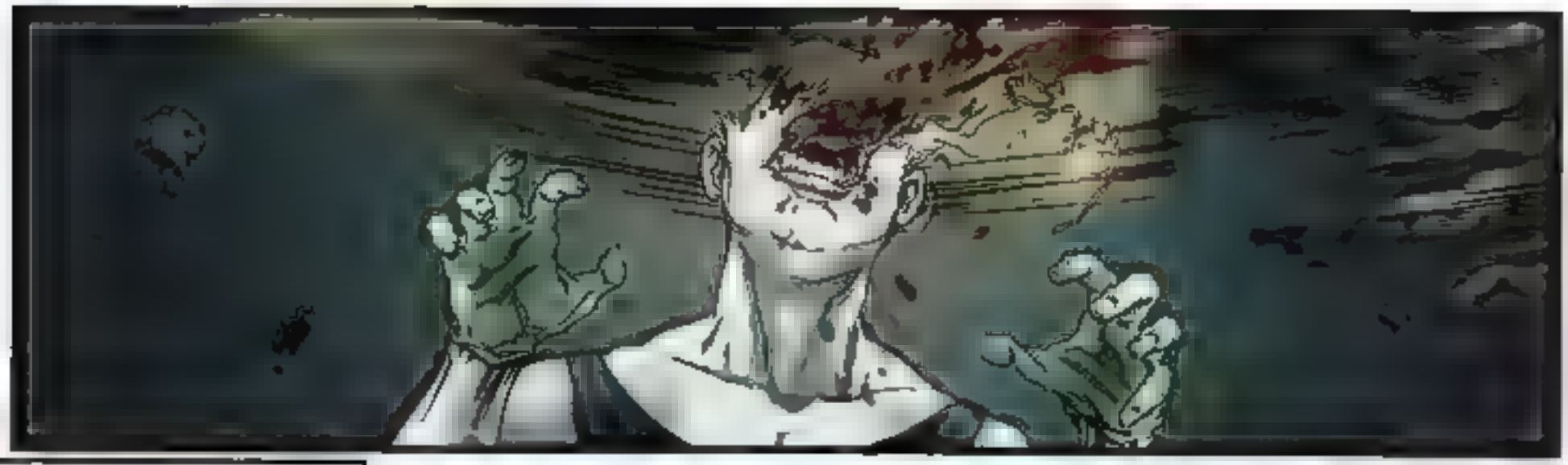
WHEN I SAW WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE GIRL I LOST IT. MY BUZZ WENT COLD IN A HEARTBEAT AND I WAS BEGGING FOR MY LIFE LIKE A CHILD. IT TOOK ALMOST THE ENTIRE CREW JUST TO GET ME TO THE STAINED MATTRESS. I WAS THRASHING LIKE A WILD ANIMAL. AN ANIMAL WAITING TO BE PUT DOWN.

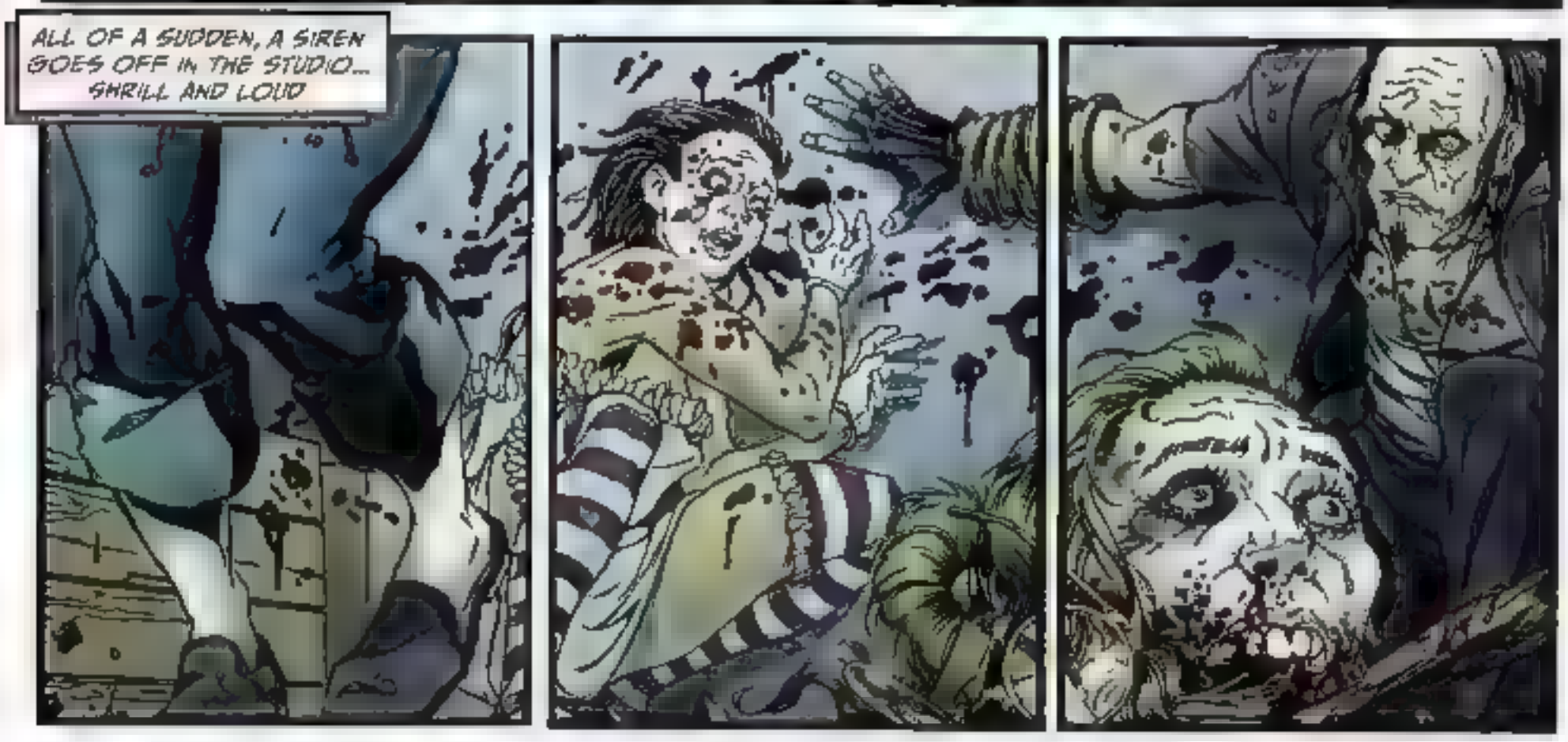
HE MUST HAVE HEARD ME HOWLING FROM OUTSIDE BECAUSE HE CAME SMASHING ONTO THE SET JUST AS THE MONSTER GOT ON TOP OF ME

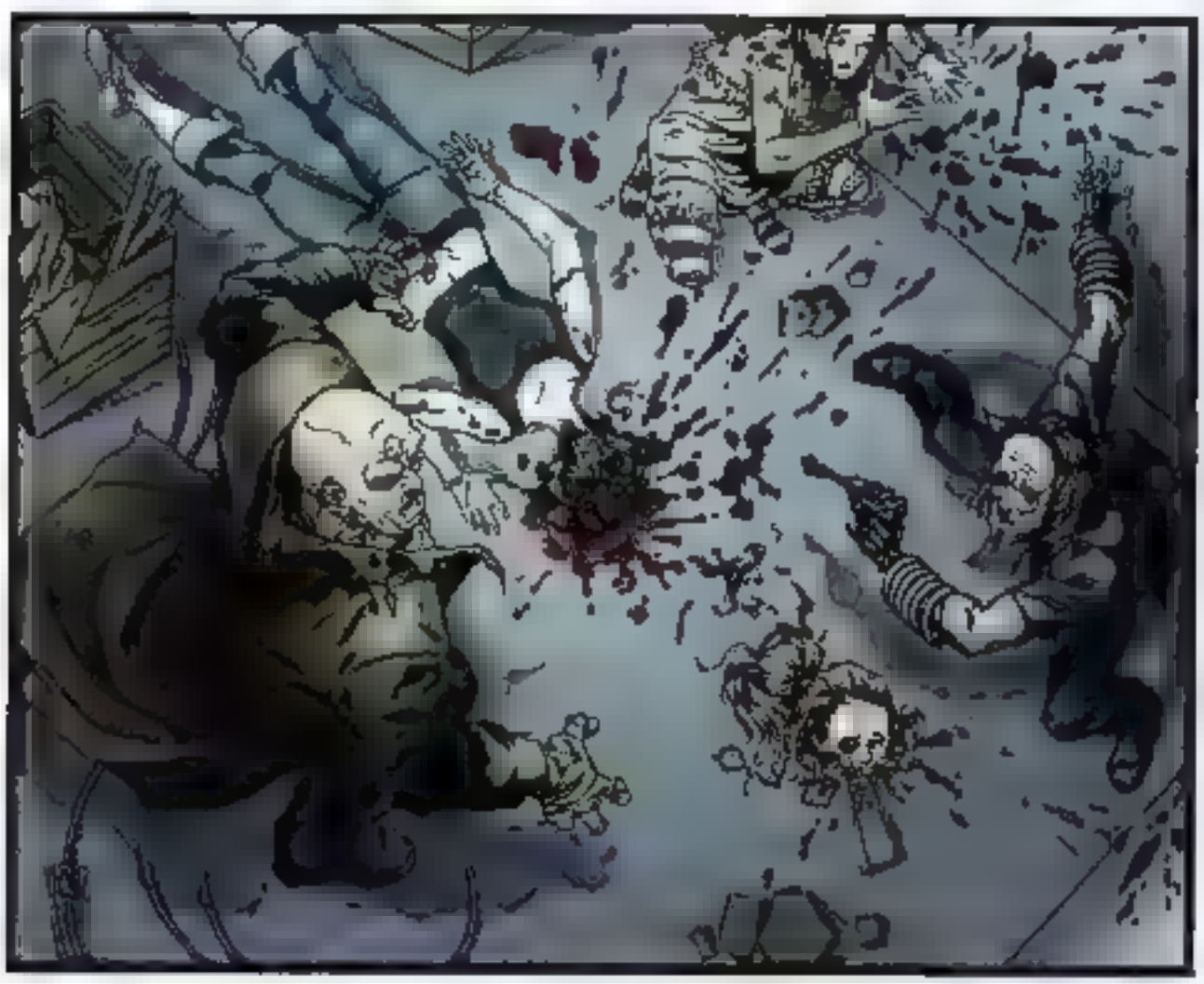
AND THATS WHEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE ..

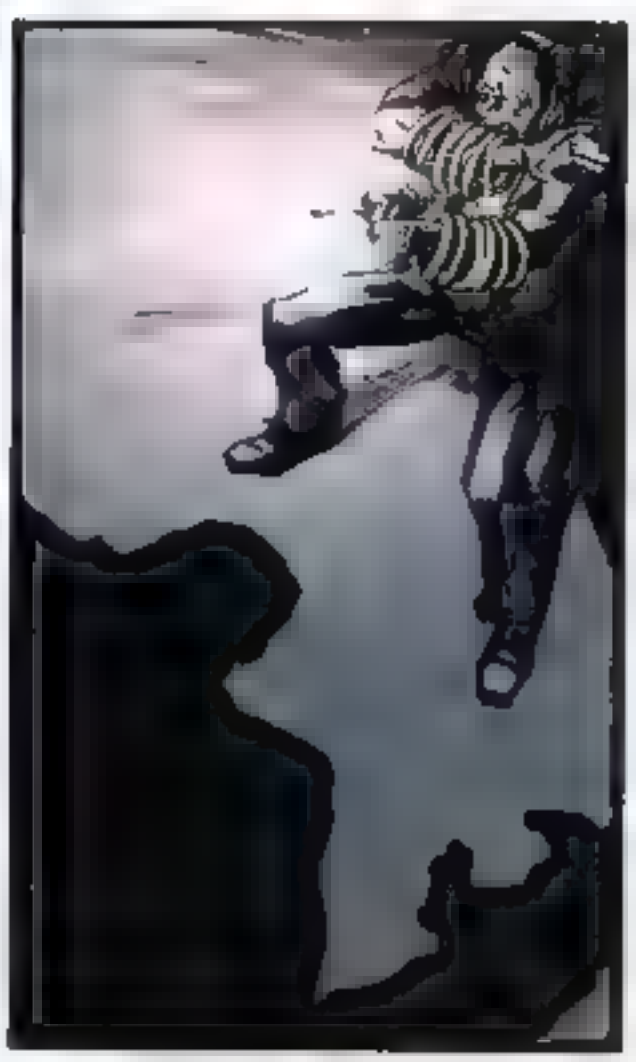


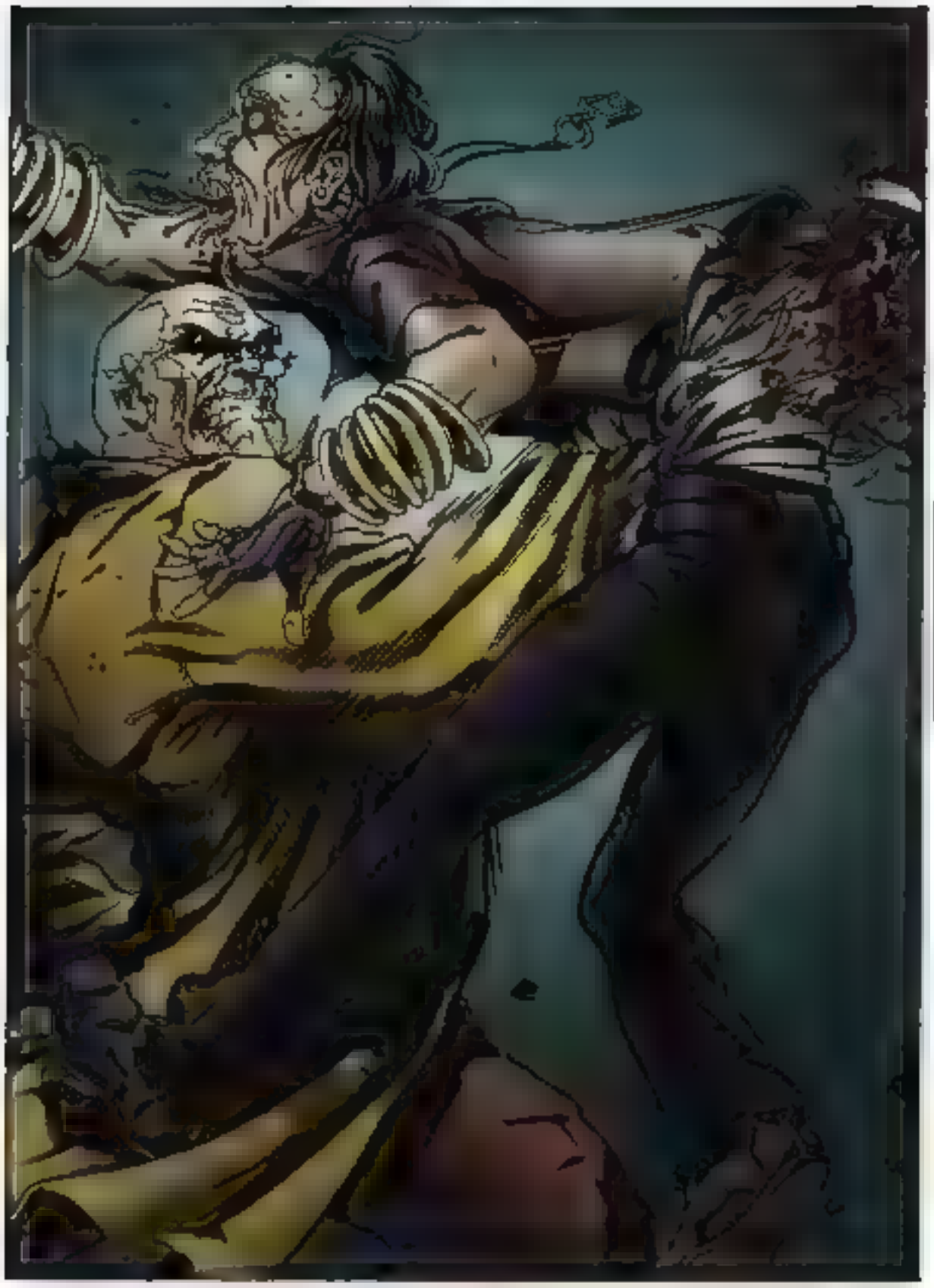




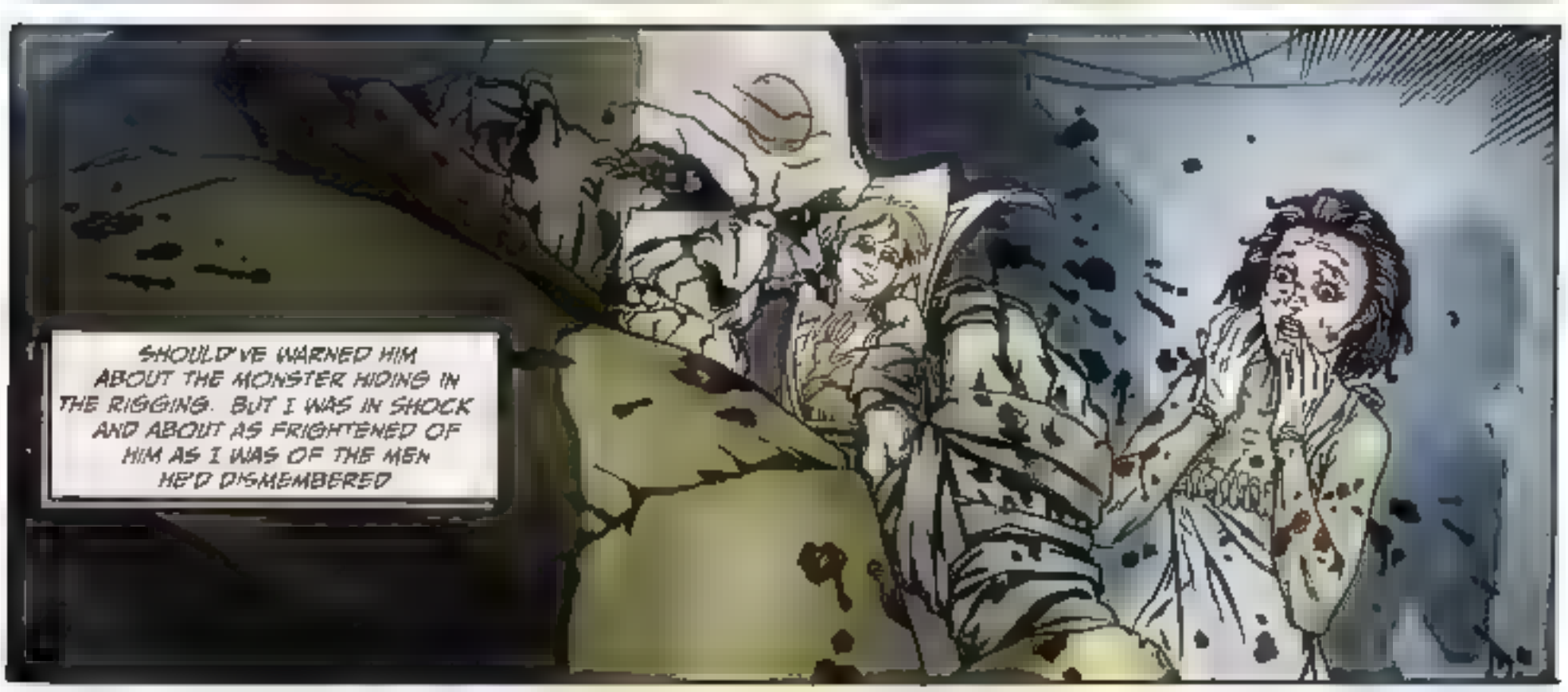

ALL OF A SUDDEN, A SIREN GOES OFF IN THE STUDIO... SHRILL AND LOUD

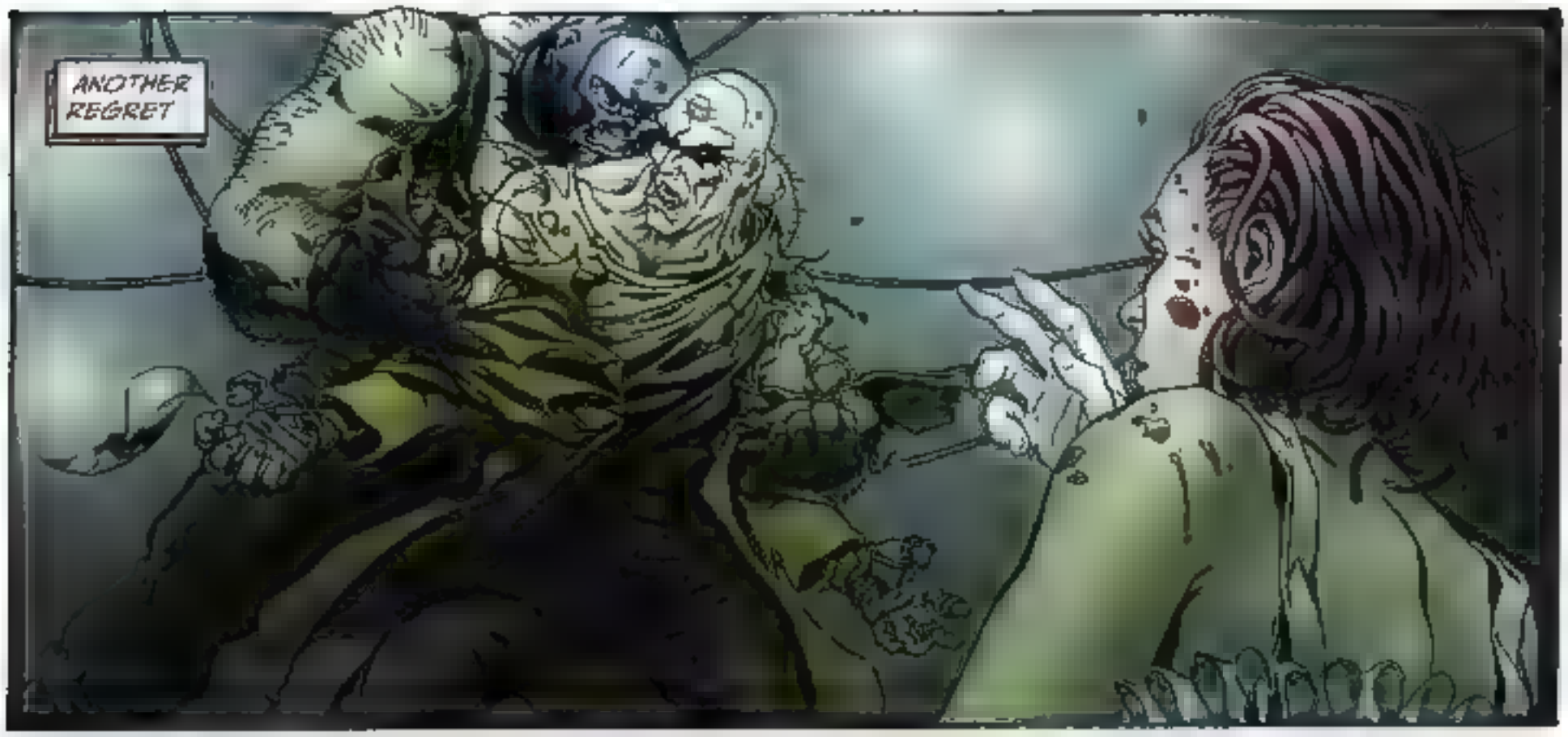


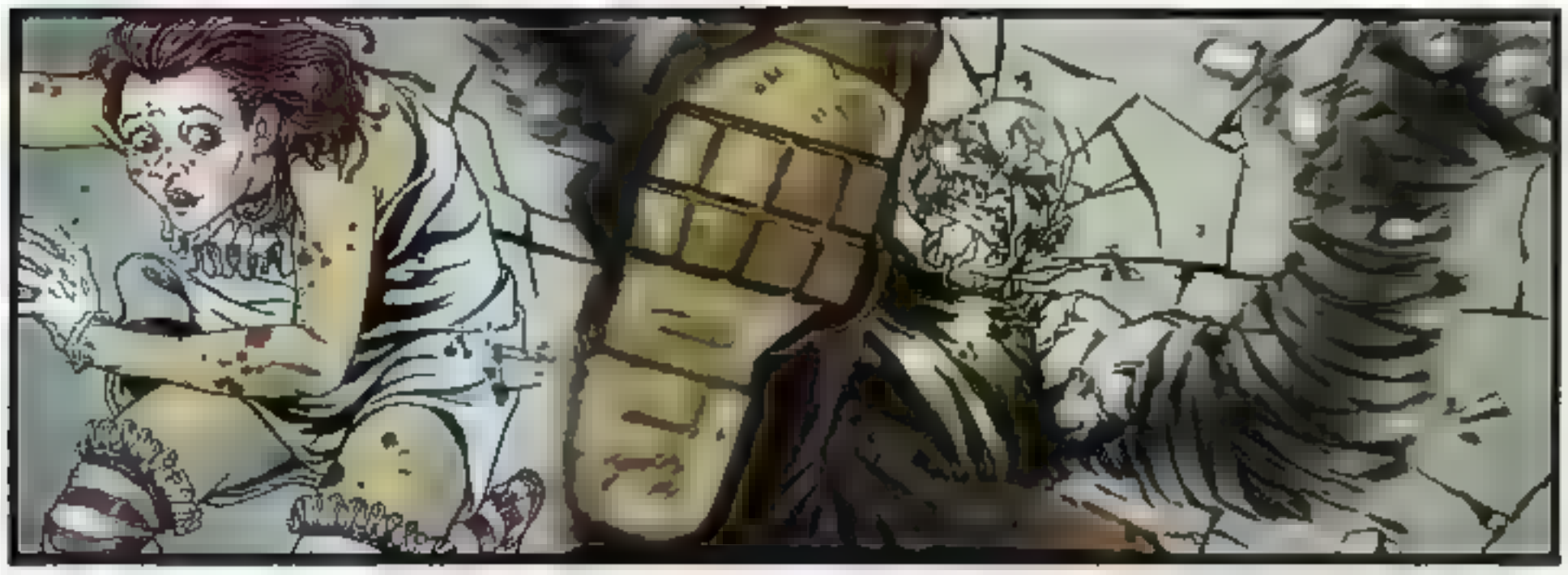




I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE MY OWN VOICE UNTIL THE DIRECTOR HIT THE WALL BEHIND ME AND THE ROOM GOT QUIET AGAIN.


SHOULD'VE WARNED HIM ABOUT THE MONSTER HIDING IN THE RIGGING. BUT I WAS IN SHOCK AND ABOUT AS FRIGHTENED OF HIM AS I WAS OF THE MEN HE'D DISMEMBERED

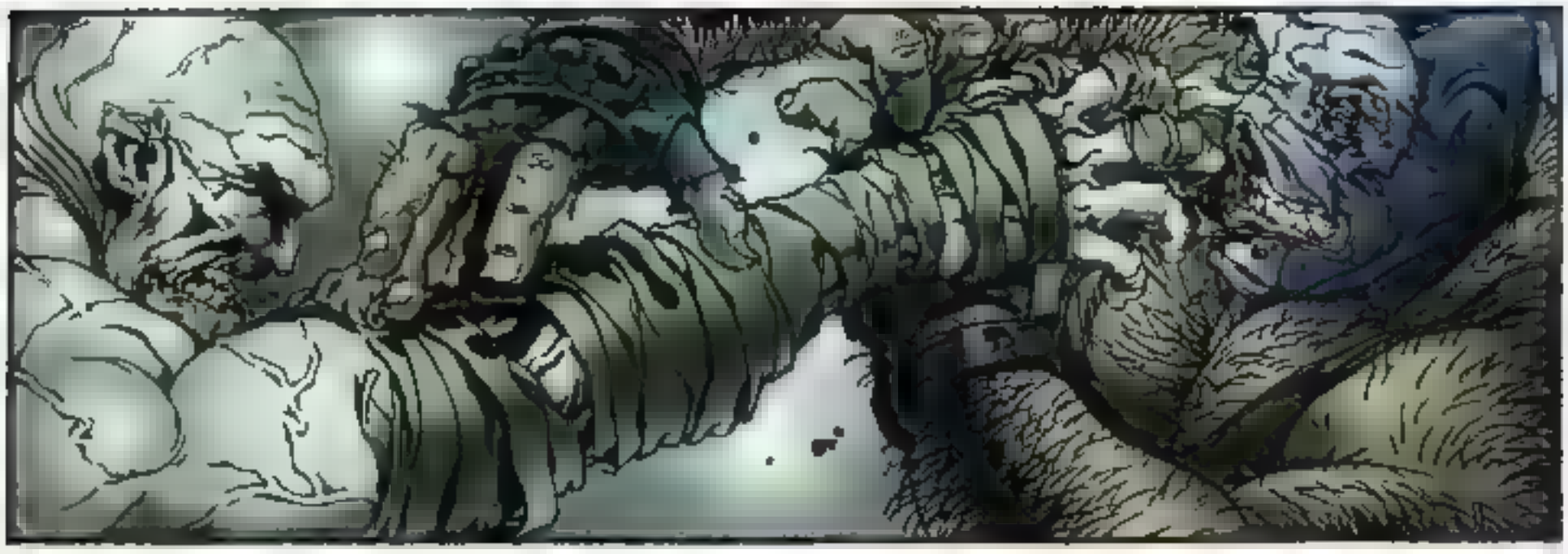

ANOTHER REGRET

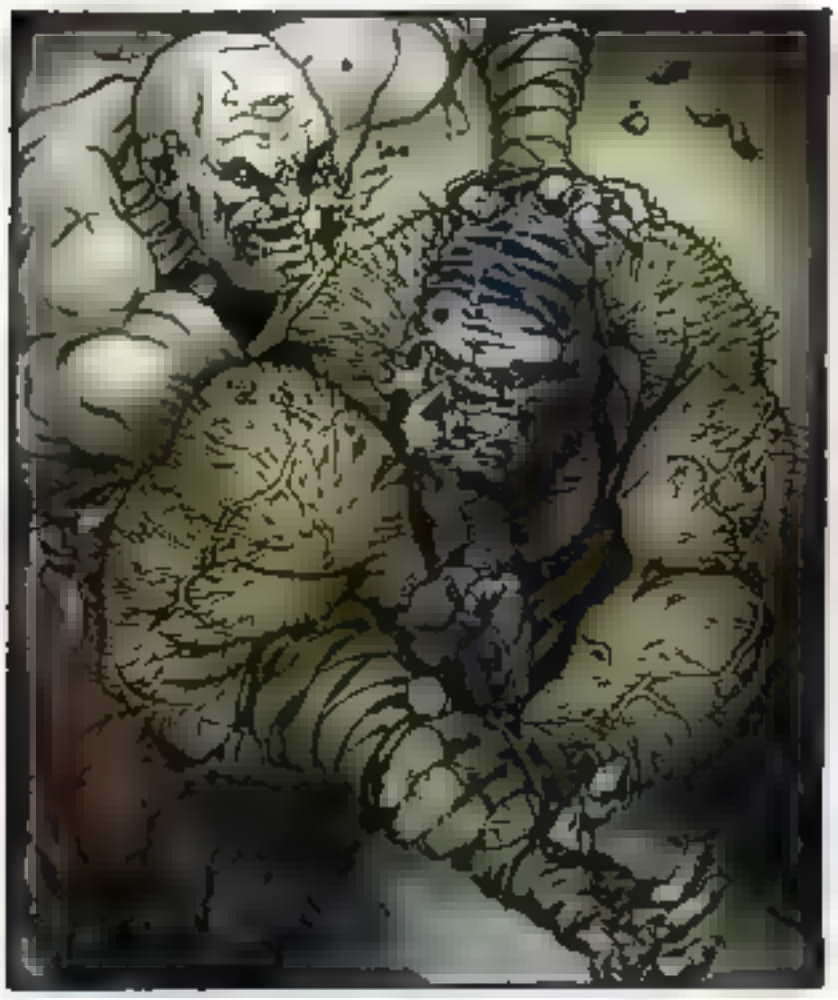


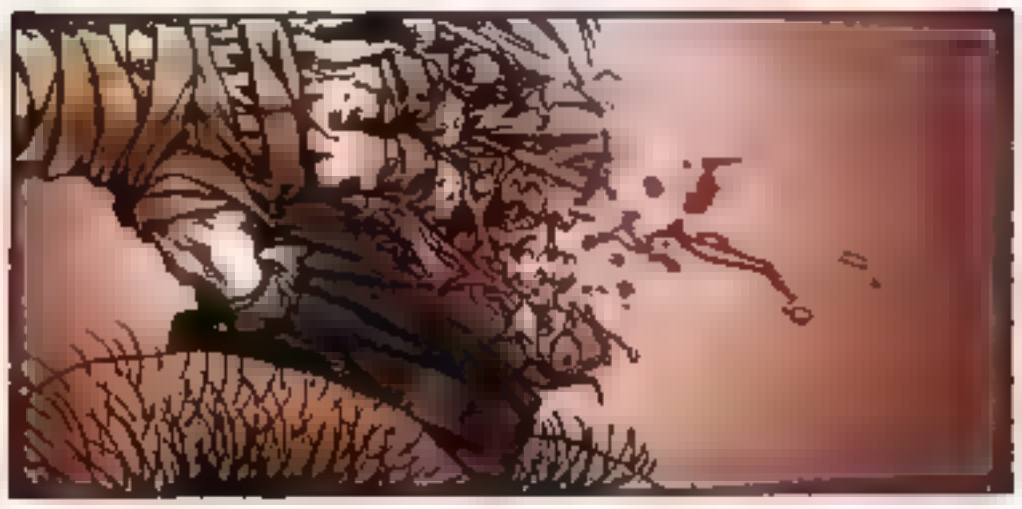
I KNEW I HAD TO GET OUT. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME REGARDLESS OF WHO CAME OUT ON TOP
THEN I SAW SOMETHING THAT FROZE ME IN MY TRACKS.

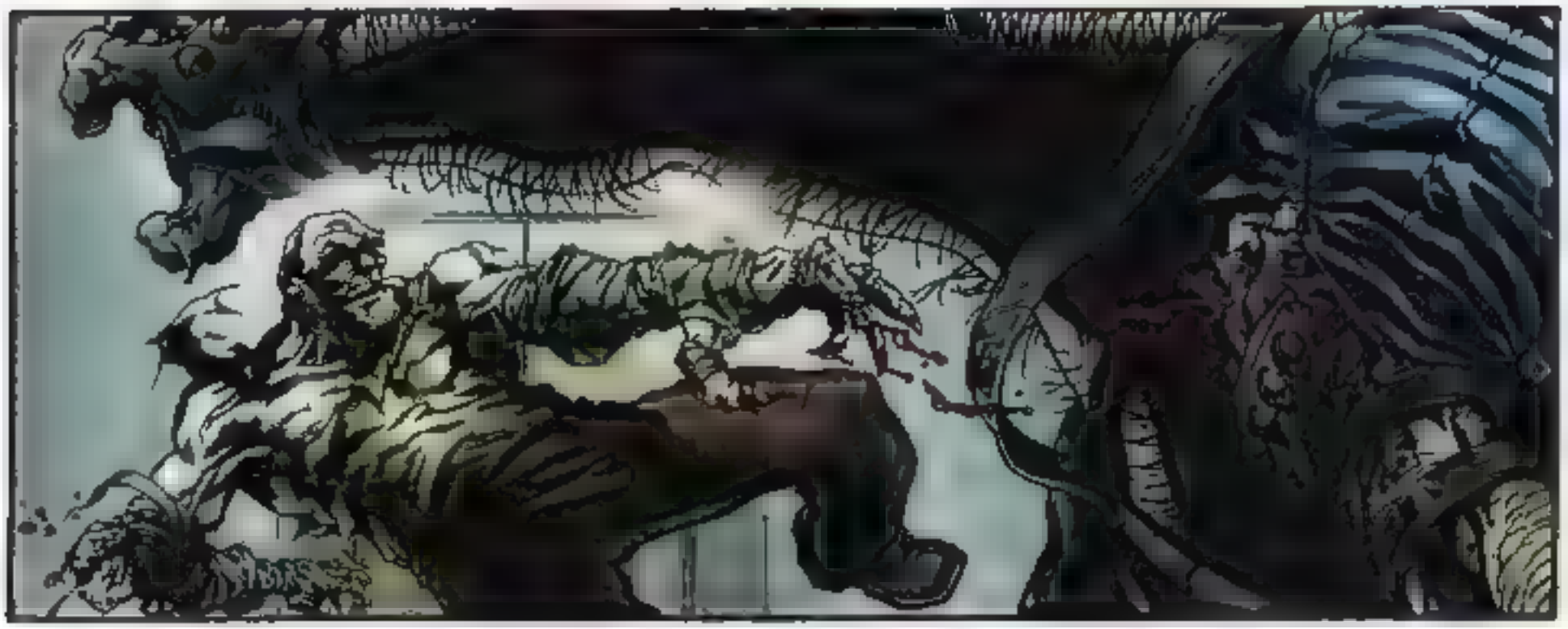
BASTARD WAS CALLING OUT TO ME FOR HELP. HE WAS SOMEHOW STILL ALIVE

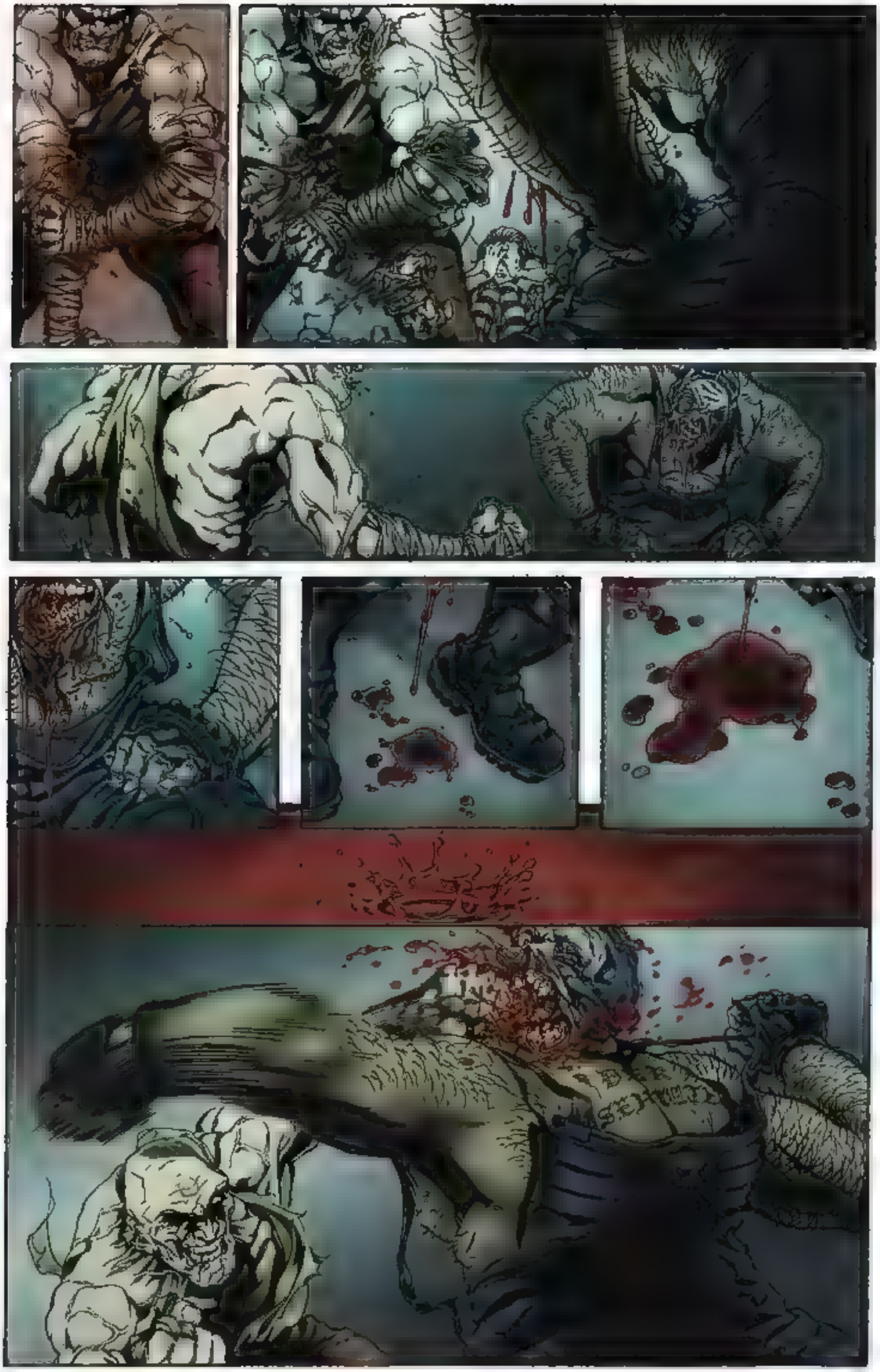
AND I WAS TRAPPED BETWEEN TWO HORRORS

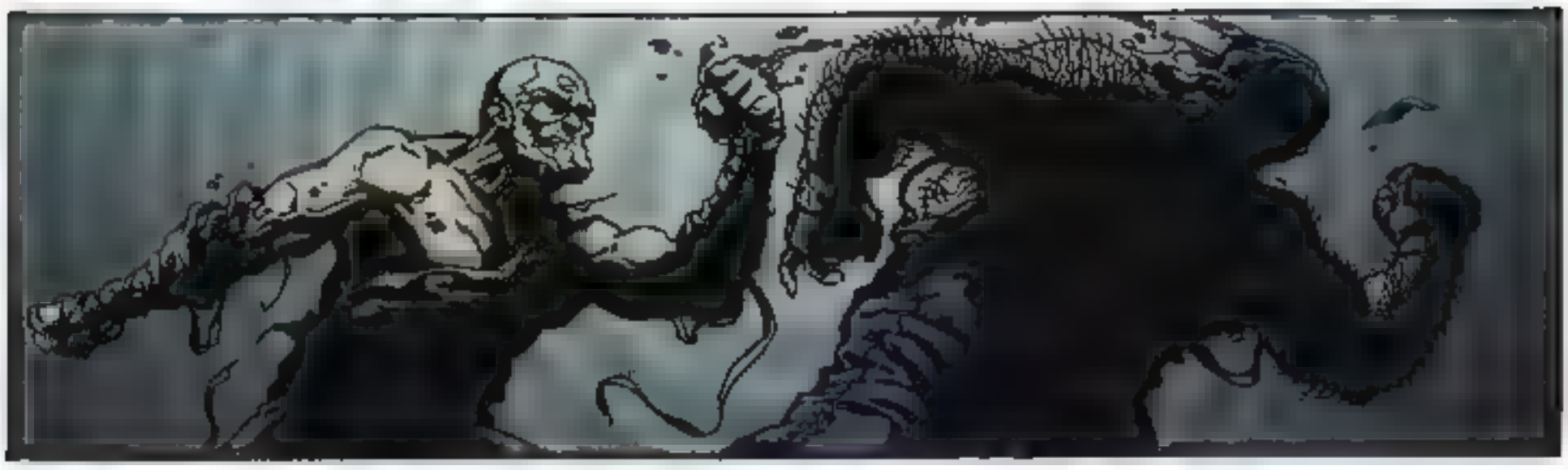


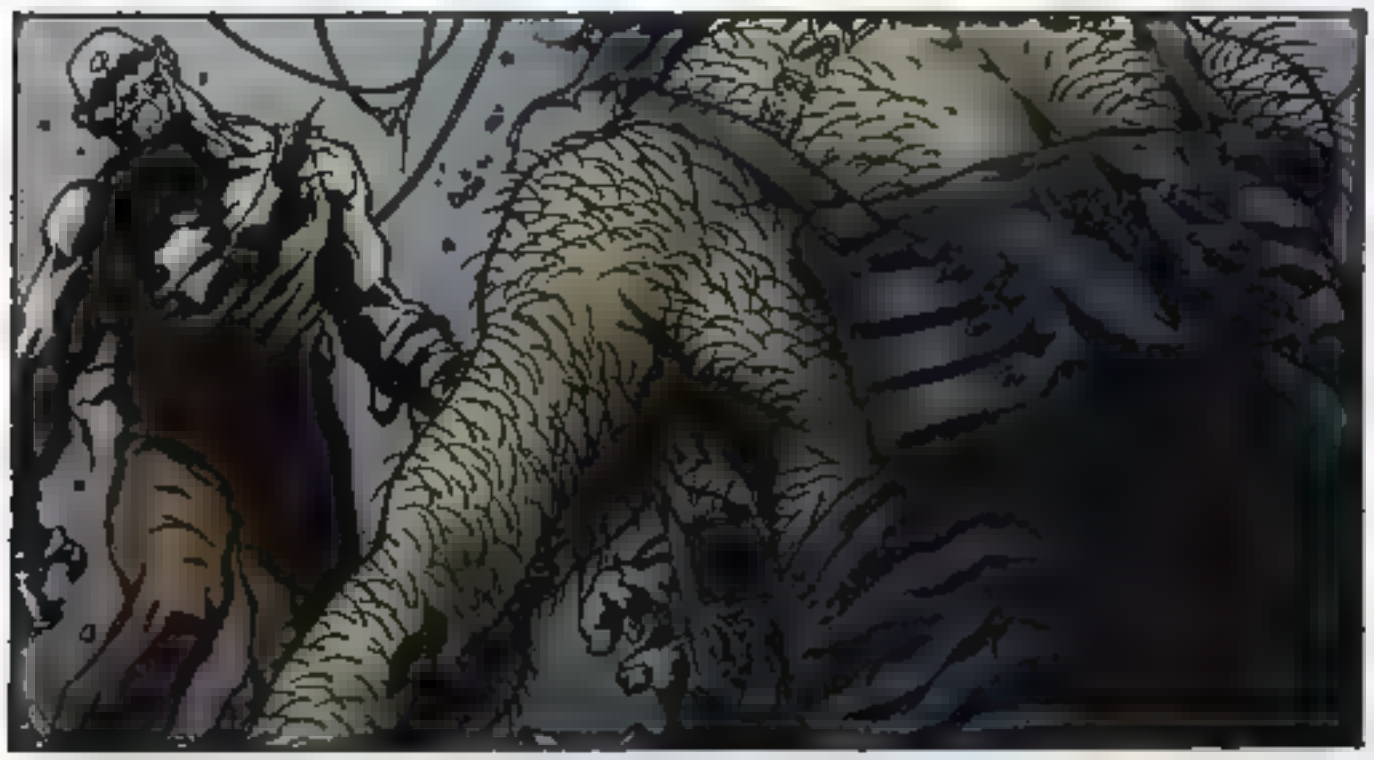


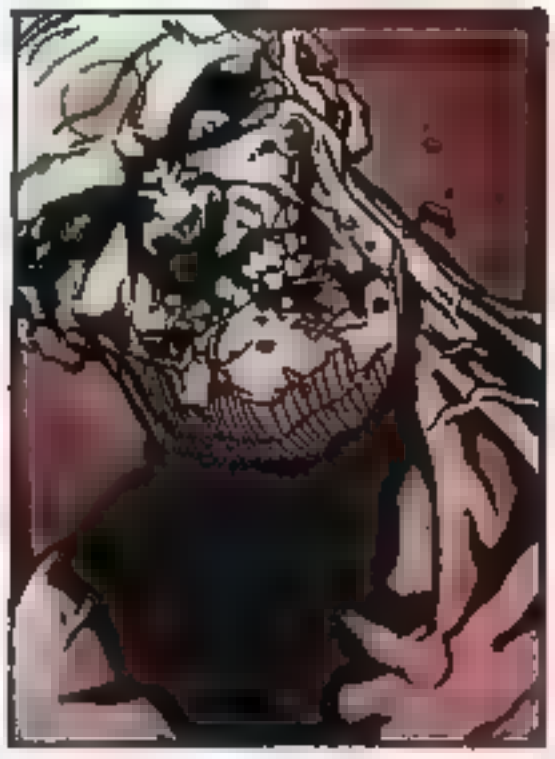


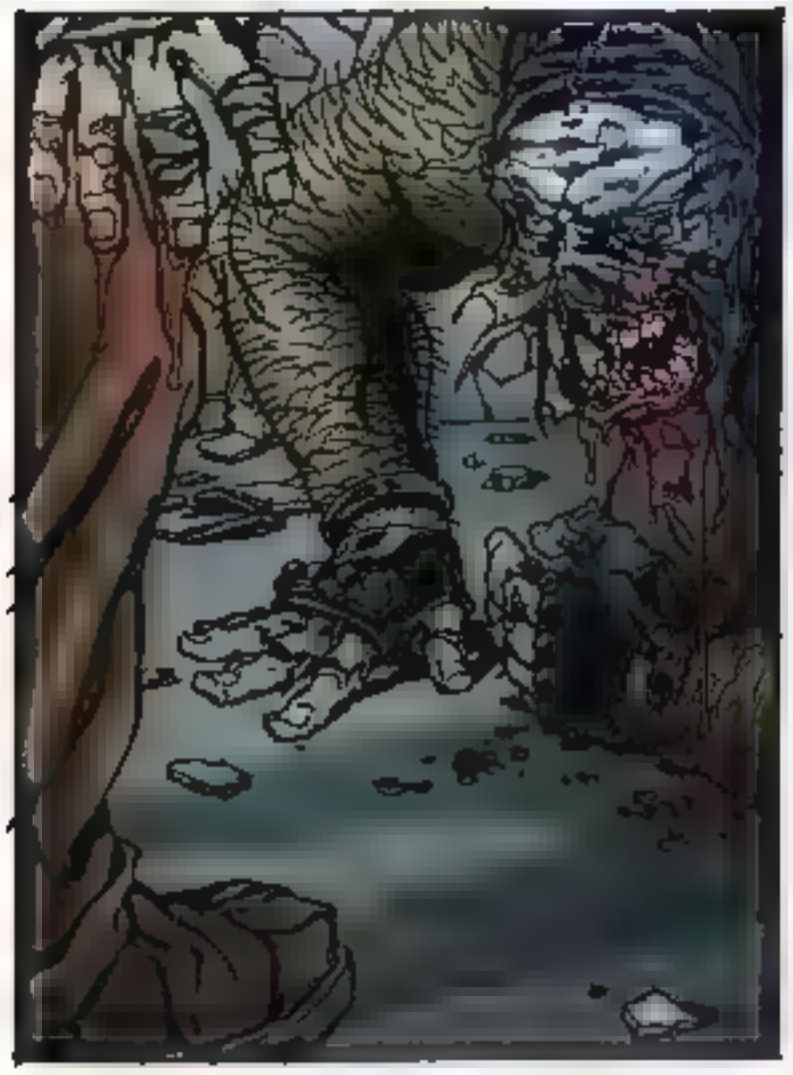


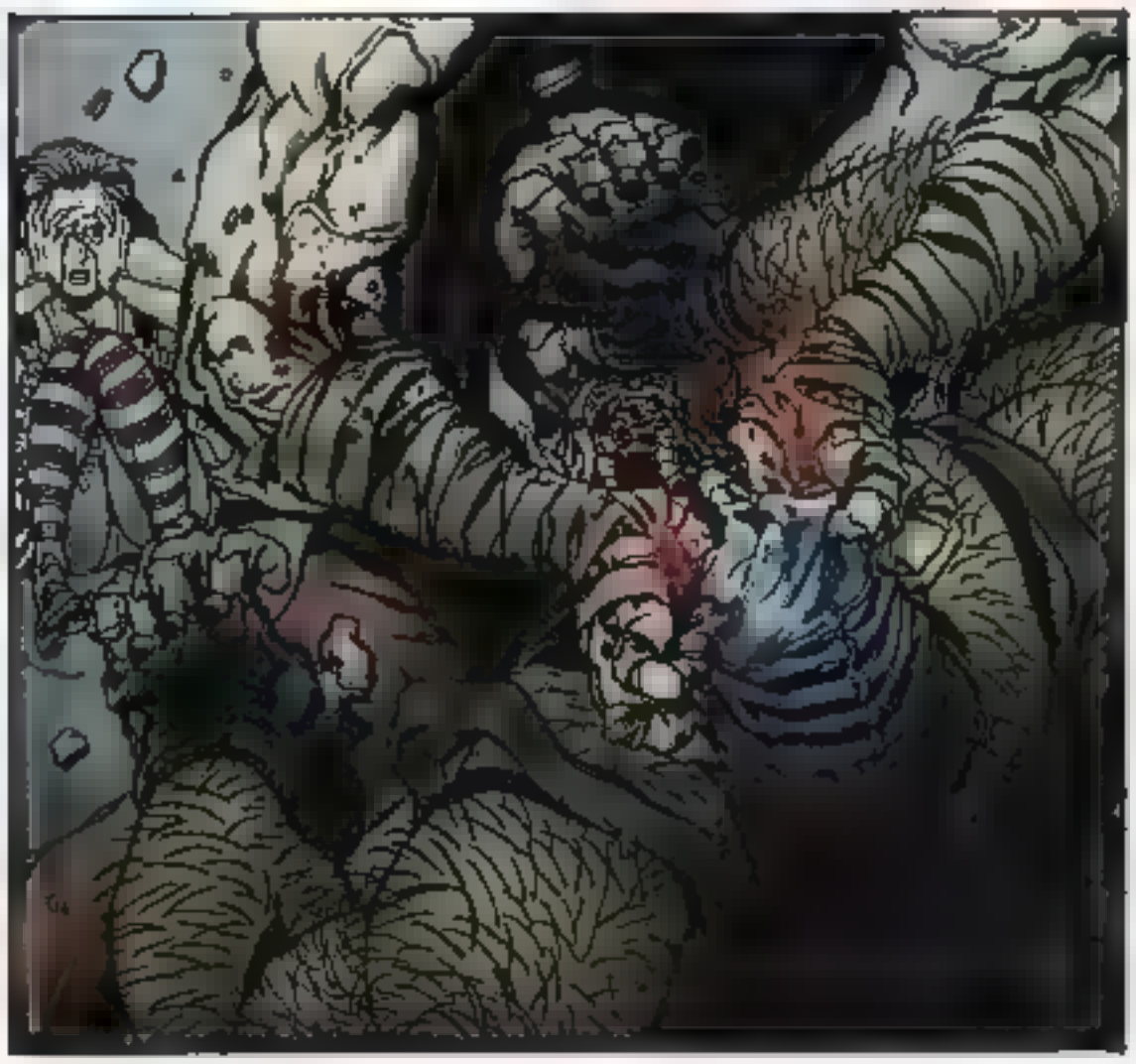






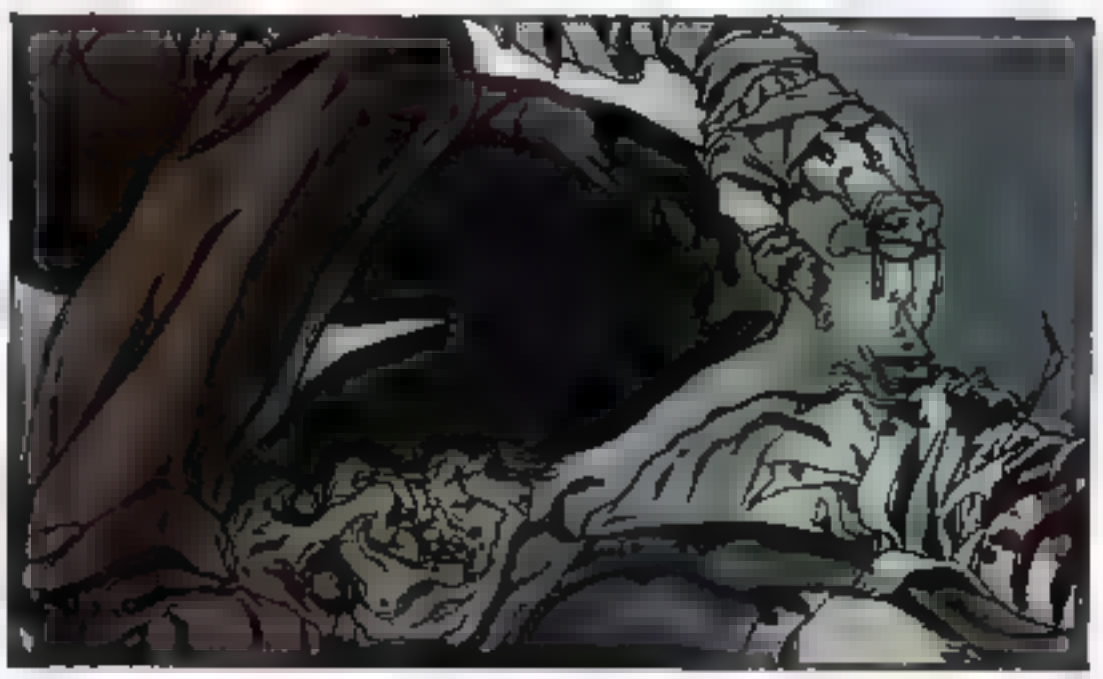


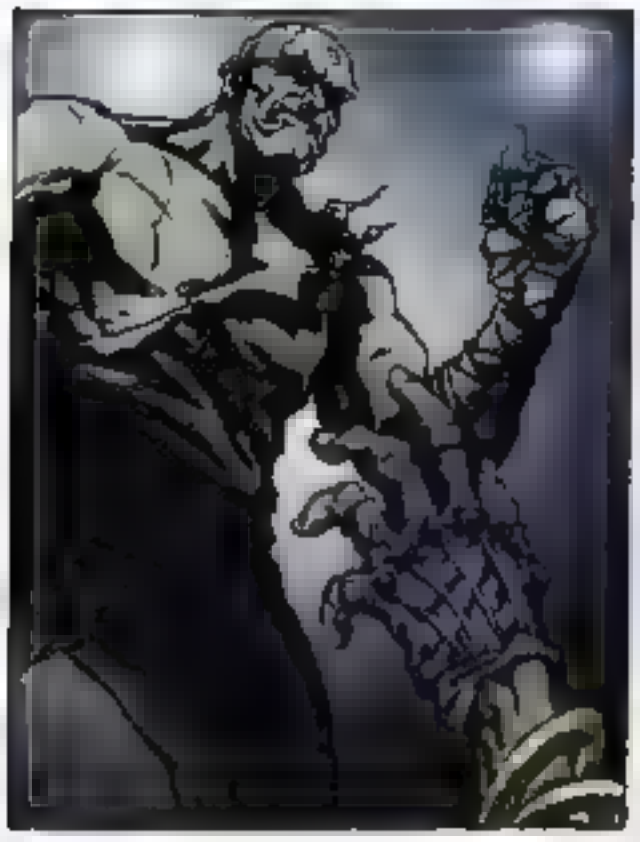




I HAD SEEN ENOUGH ..

FIGURED I'D TAKE MY CHANCES WITH THE GUY WITH THE BROKEN BACK ..





SERVES HIM RIGHT.

WEL...... WHAT HAVE WE HERE? A LITTLE RUNAWAY.

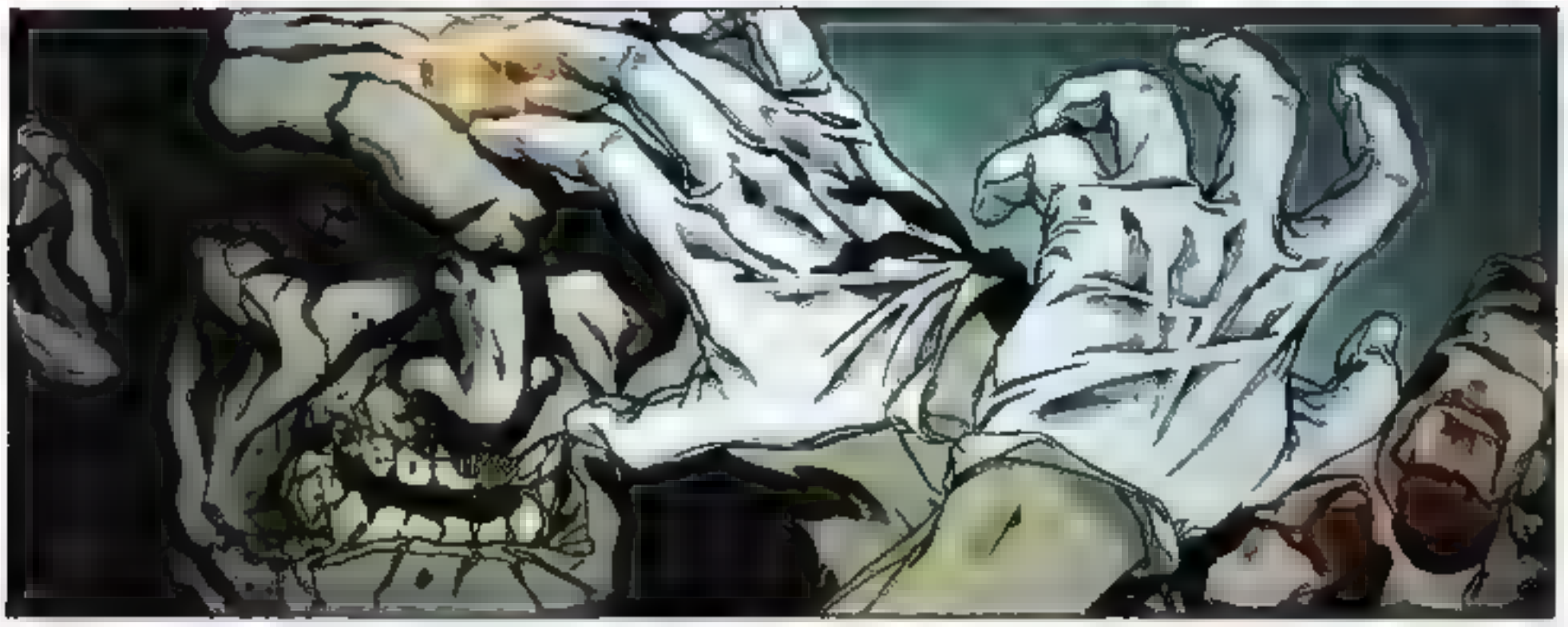
SLOW DOWN, DEAR. NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF.

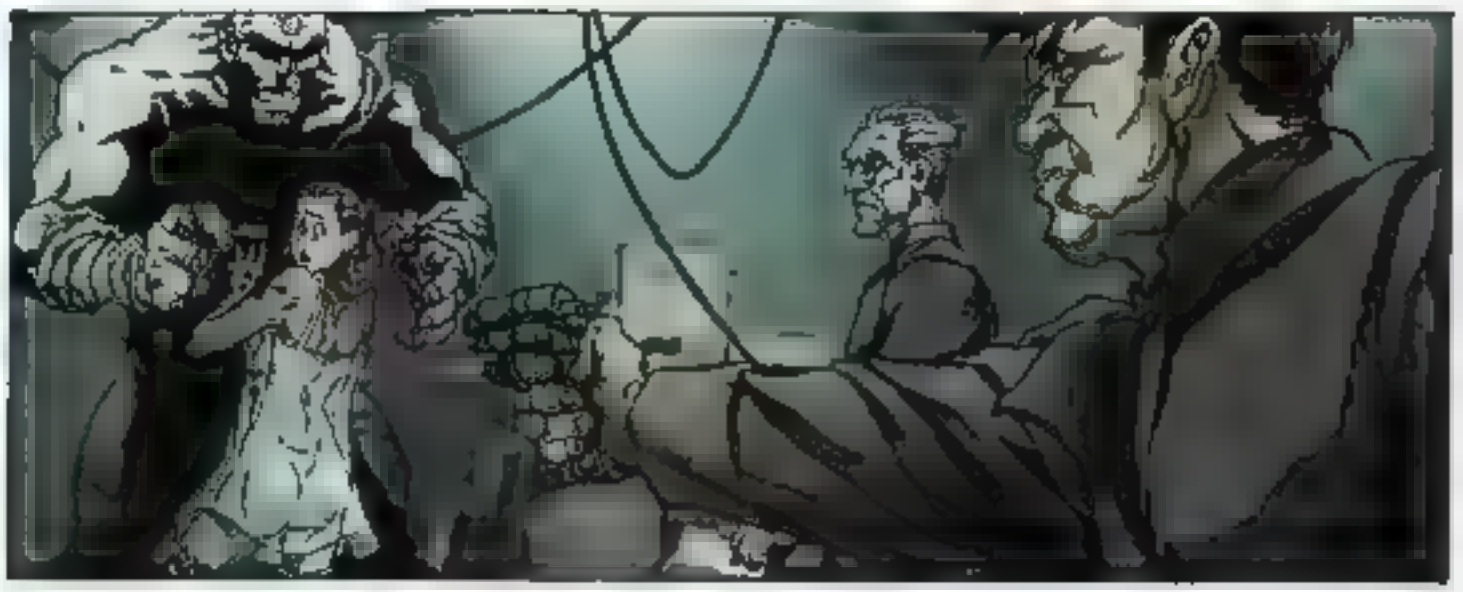
IT APPEARS THAT YOUR MAN IS GETTING A BIT SLOPPY IN HIS OLD AGE.

ENOUGH OF YOUR PETTY SARCASM! BE DONE WITH IT!

VERY WELL..

NOW THEN, YOUNG LADY.. LETS SEE ABOUT...WAIT.





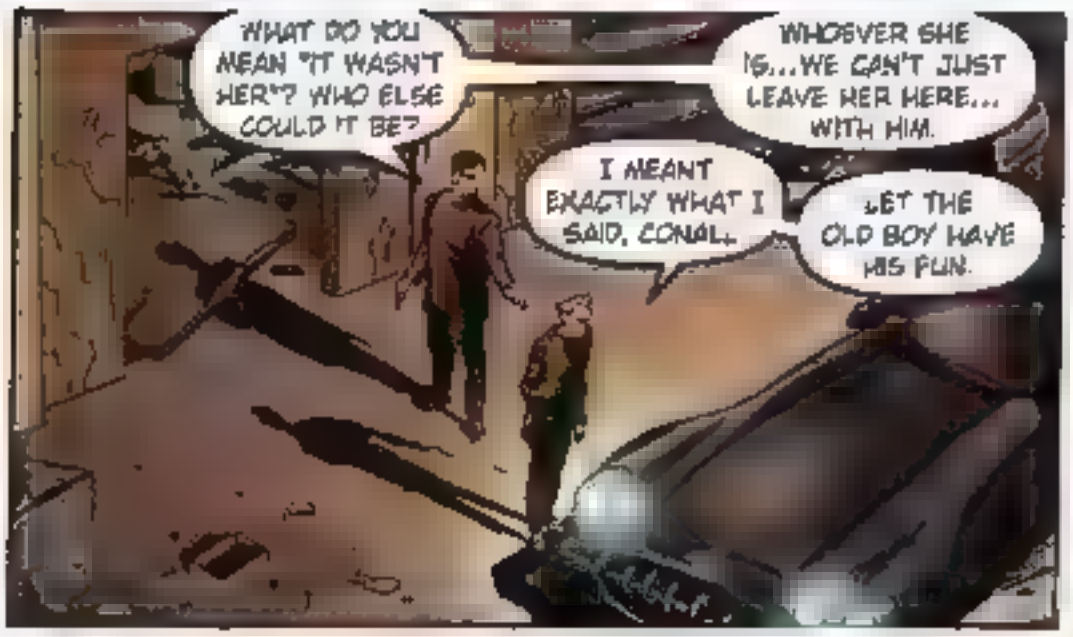
ENOUGH. . IT ISN'T HER.

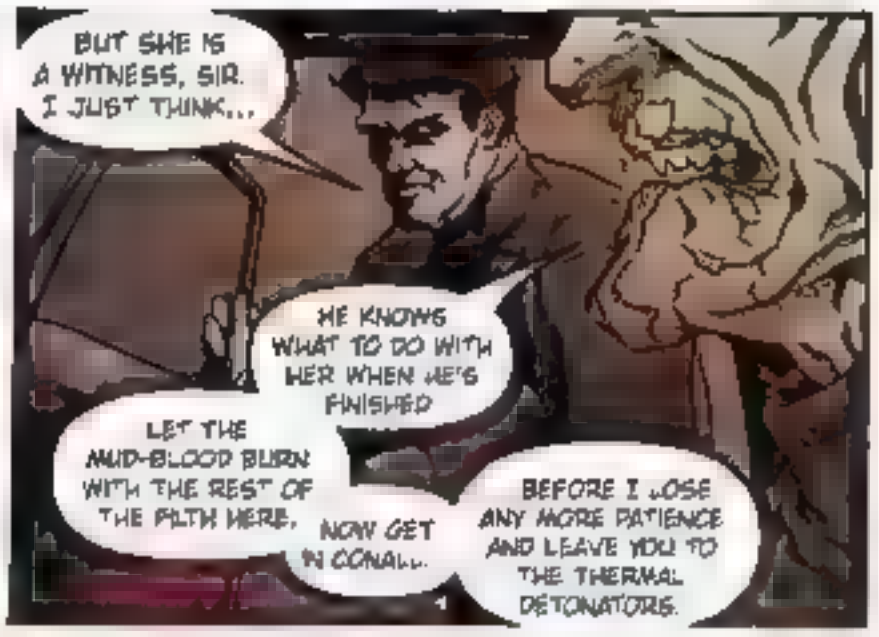
COME. WE'RE FINISHED HERE

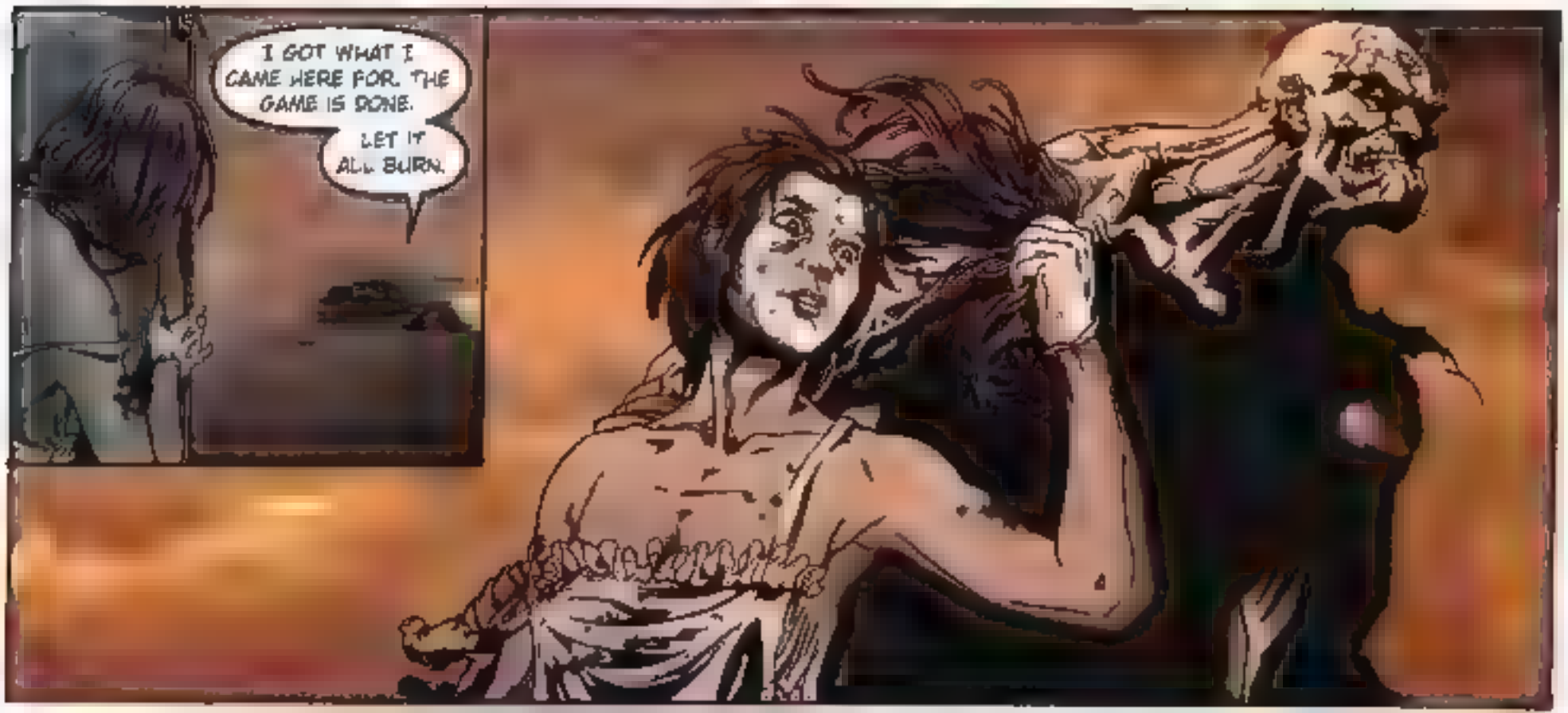
HE SMELT LIKE OLD EARTH...AND SOMETHING ELSE... HIS GREY SKIN, COLD AND DANK.

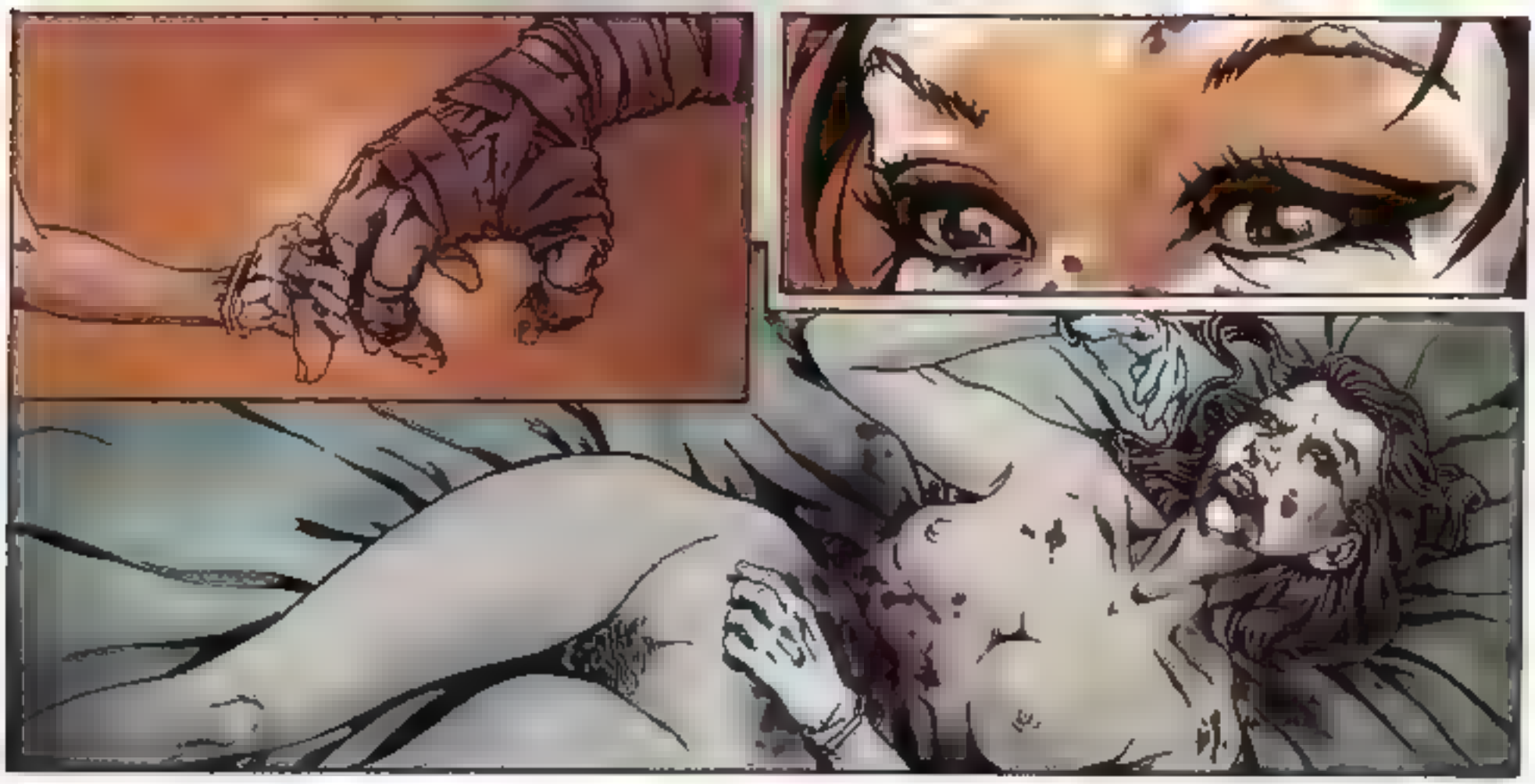
HIS STALE CLOTHES, HARDENED WITH AGES OF DRIED SWEAT, FELT LIKE CARDBOARD AGAINST MY CHEEK

BUT AT THAT MOMENT, GREY WAS EVERYTHING I'D PRAYED FOR. I HELD HIM AS HARD AS I COULD... TO KEEP HIM WITH ME.. TO KEEP ME FROM FALLING EXHAUSTED TO THE FLOOR


WHAT DO YOU MEAN "IT WASN'T HER"? WHO ELSE COULD IT BE?
WHOEVER SHE IS...WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HER HERE... WITH HIM.
I MEANT EXACTLY WHAT I SAID, CONAL.
LET THE OLD BOY HAVE HIS FUN.


BUT SHE IS A WITNESS, SIR. I JUST THINK...
HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO WITH HER WHEN HE'S FINISHED
LET THE MUD-BLOOD BURN WITH THE REST OF THE FILTH HERE.
NOW GET IN CONAL...
BEFORE I LOSE ANY MORE PATIENCE AND LEAVE YOU TO THE THERMAL DETONATORS.


I GOT WHAT I CAME HERE FOR. THE GAME IS DONE.
LET IT ALL BURN.



I TORE OFF THE BLOOD-DRENCHED COSTUME WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT... I HAD TO GET THAT STENCH OUT OF MY NOSTRILS. I USED IT LIKE A RAG TO CLEAN OFF THE MAKE-UP. I DID MY BEST FOR HER AS WELL

I'M NOT EVEN SURE HOW I GOT HIM TO DIG THE HOLE IN THE FIRST PLACE

I SUPPOSE THAT HE MUST HAVE JUST ASSUMED IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO

ONCE THE HOLE WAS DEEP ENOUGH, HE PUT THE BOX IN AND PILED THE EARTH BACK ON TOP OF HER

I COULDN'T EVEN THINK OF ANYTHING TO SAY

I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HER NAME

WHILE **GREY** SET TO PLANTING THE THERMAL CHARGES HE BROUGHT IN HIS SUITCASE THROUGHOUT THE STUDIO, I RUMMAGED THROUGH SOME OF THE OLD COSTUME RACKS AND PROP CHESTS UNTIL I FOUND SOME CLOTHES I COULD WEAR. ANYTHING WITHOUT BLOOD ON IT.

WE MET OUT FRONT AND WATCHED THE FIREWORKS TOGETHER

AS WE TURNED FROM THE STUDIO TOGETHER, I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT PART OF WHO I USED TO BE WAS LOST IN THE FIRE BEHIND US... BURIED ALONGSIDE THE GIRL IN THE BACK LOT.

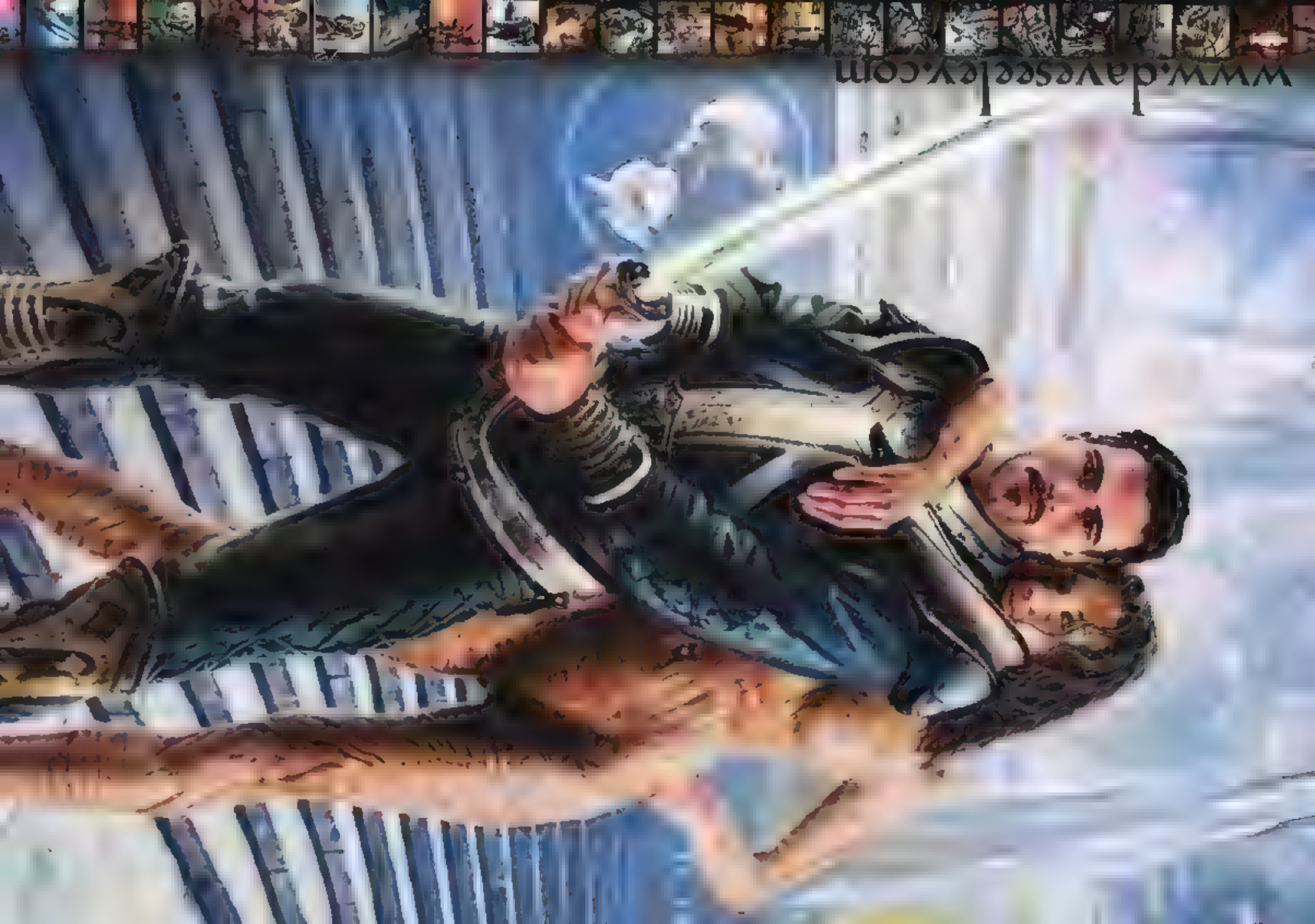
I HAD NO IDEA THEN HOW ACCURATE THOSE FEELINGS WOULD TURN OUT TO BE...

NO...I WAS TOO DISTRACTED BY THE NEW POSSIBILITIES I SAW BEFORE ME TO SEE THAT I WAS LEAVING ONE DYING BLAZE BEHIND ME...

AND WALKING FULL INTO THE FACE OF ANOTHER WAITING INFERNO...

www.daveseeley.com

www.davesteley.com



www.pavsel.com

SPACE RATS

by Gonzalo Ruggieri

AT LAST... I'VE CROSSED THREE GALAXIES FOR THIS JOB, BUT THE TRUTH IS I NEED THE MONEY AND THE PAY IS WORTH IT.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO COMPLETE THE WORK, BUT I HONESTLY DON'T CARE... I'M THE BEST AT WHAT I DO.

MR. KURCLI, THE HITMAN HAS ARRIVED, AND HE'S WEARING A DISGUISE, AS EXPECTED.

HA! I KNEW HE WAS COMING. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT PRESTON WOULD NEVER FORGIVE ME FOR THE MERCH SCAM.

LET HIM IN. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO...

YES, SIR.

COME IN, MR. KURCLI IS WAITING FOR YOU.

COME IN, COME IN, DON'T BE SHY.

THIS IS GOING TO BE EASIER THAN I EXPECTED...

HI! GOOD EVENING TO YOU, SIR.

NO MORE BULLSHIT, IT'S TIME TO DO THE DIRTY WORK.

BANG BANG BANG

MR. KURCLI... HE WAS REACHING FOR A *VACUUM CLEANER*...

WE MUST STOP CONFUSING THE CLEAN NG PEOPLE ...THIS PLACE IS A MESS...

the end?

"BLESSED BE THE ANCIENT GODS, WHOSE NAMES WERE LONG FORGOTTEN IN TIME!"

"ADMIRE THE ARC RECIPIENT OF THE ANCIENT GALAXY, BUILT BY OUR OWN HAND, DESTINED TO PRESERVE OUR OWN SPECIES!"

WE'VE CONFIRMED AN INTERFERENCE IN ODIN'S INTERNAL COMMUNICATION INSIDE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SECTORS, SIR

MAKE SURE THE HAMMER AND THE OTHER DEFENSE SYSTEMS ARE FULLY FUNCTIONAL.

THE HAMMER IS OPERATIVE, SIR THE [redacted] HAS CONFIRMED IT.

THE ORIGIN OF THIS MALFUNCTION IS UNKNOWN

ggdrasil.

PERHAPS IT WAS A VIRUS UPLOADED FROM INSIDE THE ARC--

NONSENSE!

IT WAS THOSE DOLMENIAN BASTARDS!

"THROUGH THE MILLENIA, OUR MIND AND KNOWLEDGE EXPANDED BEYOND THE KNOWN LIMITS, AND OUR NATURE CHANGED."

"IT EVOLVED INTO SOMETHING MORE TRANSCENDENT."

"BUT IN THE SAME WAY OUR BEING WAS TRANSFORMED THROUGH LIGHT AND SCIENCE..."

GANYMEDE! THIS IS THE CAPTAIN SPEAKING:

I WANT YOU TO CONFIRM ALL ACTIVITY INSIDE THE DOLMEN GALAXY THAT COULD HAVE JAMMED OUR SIGNALS IN THE LAST 72 HOURS

AND CONTACT ME WITH FATHER!

"... WE WERE ALSO PREY TO THE MOST BASIC AND PRIMAL EMOTION OUR KIND CAN BEAR"

"FEAR."

FATED

WRITER: ALEX ALICE
ARTWORK: JUAN CABALLERO
RENATO GUERRA
LETTERING

Non-isolated incident registered 10815.23 seconds ago.

with consecuential jamming of integral user communication.

Situational level is manageable.

OUR COURSE OF ACTION?

Earth.

"THE LIVING CORE OF THE ARC AND SOURCE OF THE IMMENSE COMMUNICATION NETWORK KNOW AS ODIN."

"THE HEART AND BLOOD OF YGGDRASIL."

The headquarters were temporarily transferred to the Ganymede Complex

The analysts of the operation deck take responsability.

FATHER? WE HAVE A SITUATION.

"I AM FATHER--"

I AM AWARE.

"--HEIR OF THE TECHNOCRATS AND REGENT OF THE ARC."

WE BELIEVE THE ONES RESPONSIBLE MIGHT BE DOLMENIANS

ARE YOU CERTAIN?

"OLD NAMES COME UP."

"THAT DISTANT THREAT IS FINALLY COMING CLOSE."

WE HAVEN'T CONFIRMED OUR TELEMETRY, BUT A GRAND SCALE INVASION IS [redacted]

THE INCIDENT HAD THE PURPOSE OF LOWERING OUR DEFENSES AND HINDERING OUR COMMUNICATIONS.

CONFIRMATION OF OFFENSIVE SECTORS, SIR!

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST, CAPTAIN?

DECLARE A *STATE OF EMERGENCY* TO ALLOW US TO CONCENTRATE OUR RESERVES ON THE HAMMER, EVEN *GANYMEDE'S*.

THE INNER SECURITY PROTOCOLS *WON'T* BE NECESSARY.

"COULD THIS BE THE *TIME'S END* OF WHICH OUR *FATHERS* SPOKE?"

ODIN: DEACTIVATE THE *INTERNAL PROTOCOLS* OF THE ARC AND CHANNEL GANYMEDE'S RESERVES

THE [illegible] *SLEIPNIR*

Password confirmed

Protocols deactivated

Initiating energy reinforcement destined to *the Hammer*

CONFIRMED! *ODIN* LOGGED OUT .08 SECONDS AGO.

PERFECT.

BUT SIR. WE STILL DON'T HAVE TELEMETRY RESULTS.

IT'S UNIMPORTANT.

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR THEORY ABOUT A *VIRUS* UPLOADED FROM *INSIDE* THE ARC...?

IT WAS VERY ACCURATE!

PHASE ONE COMPLETE.

PROCEED WITH THE SABOTAGE OF THE HUMAN MEGASTRUCTURE.

"I AM BLIND."

"I AM DEAF"

"THE END OF OUR HOUSE HAS ARRIVED."

HUMAN MEGASTRUCTURE SABOTAGED, INITIATE STERILIZATION!

I RECIEVED CONFIRMATION. ALL DEVICES ARE IN PLACE.

"I HAVE NO NAME"

"I AM A CHILD."

"I AM THE LAST OF MY KIND"

INITIATING STERILIZATION.

"BUT IN THE VERY END."

"EVEN FEAR VANISHES."

SENDING SIGNAL...

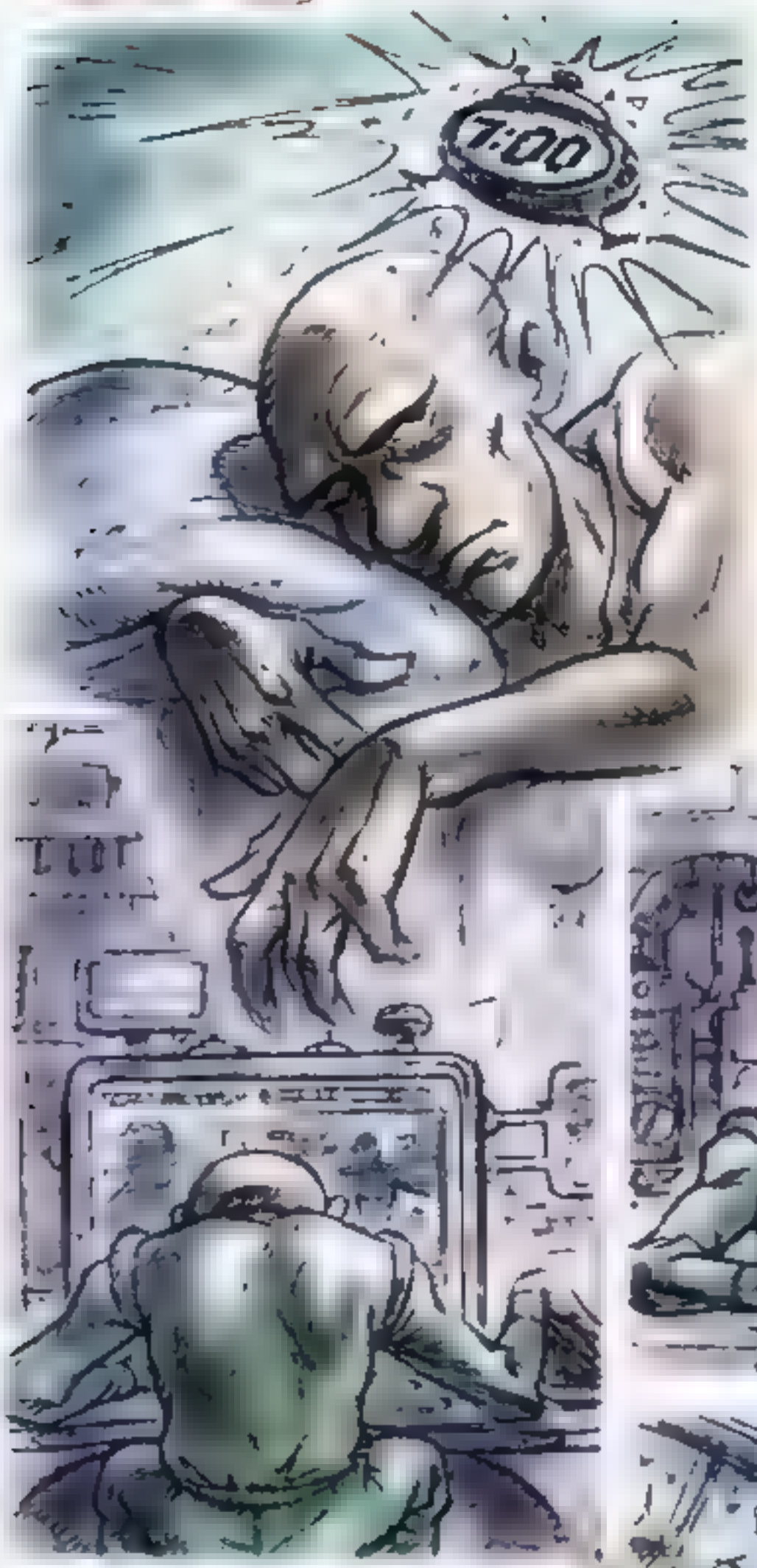
CENTRAL, UNDER-COVER AGENT REPORTING.

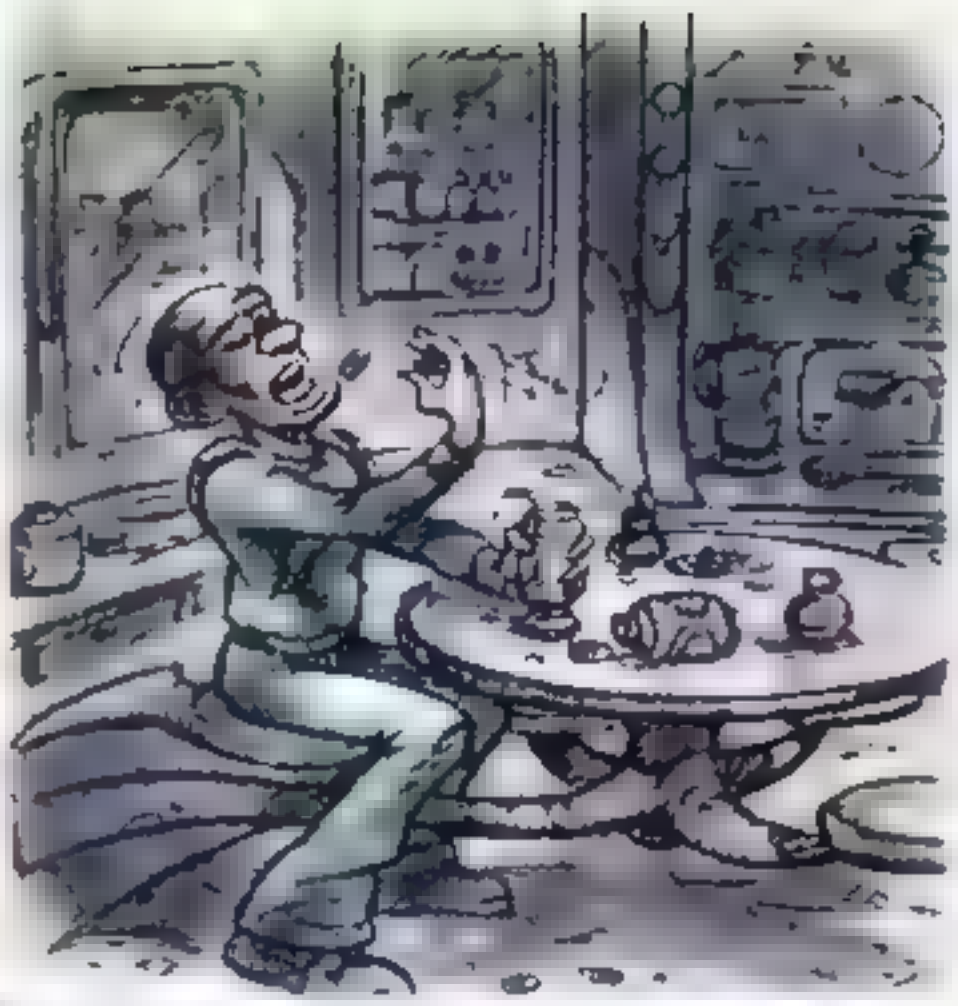
WE'VE TAKEN CONTROL OF THE MEGA-ARC AND DESTROYED IT'S PATRIARCHATE.

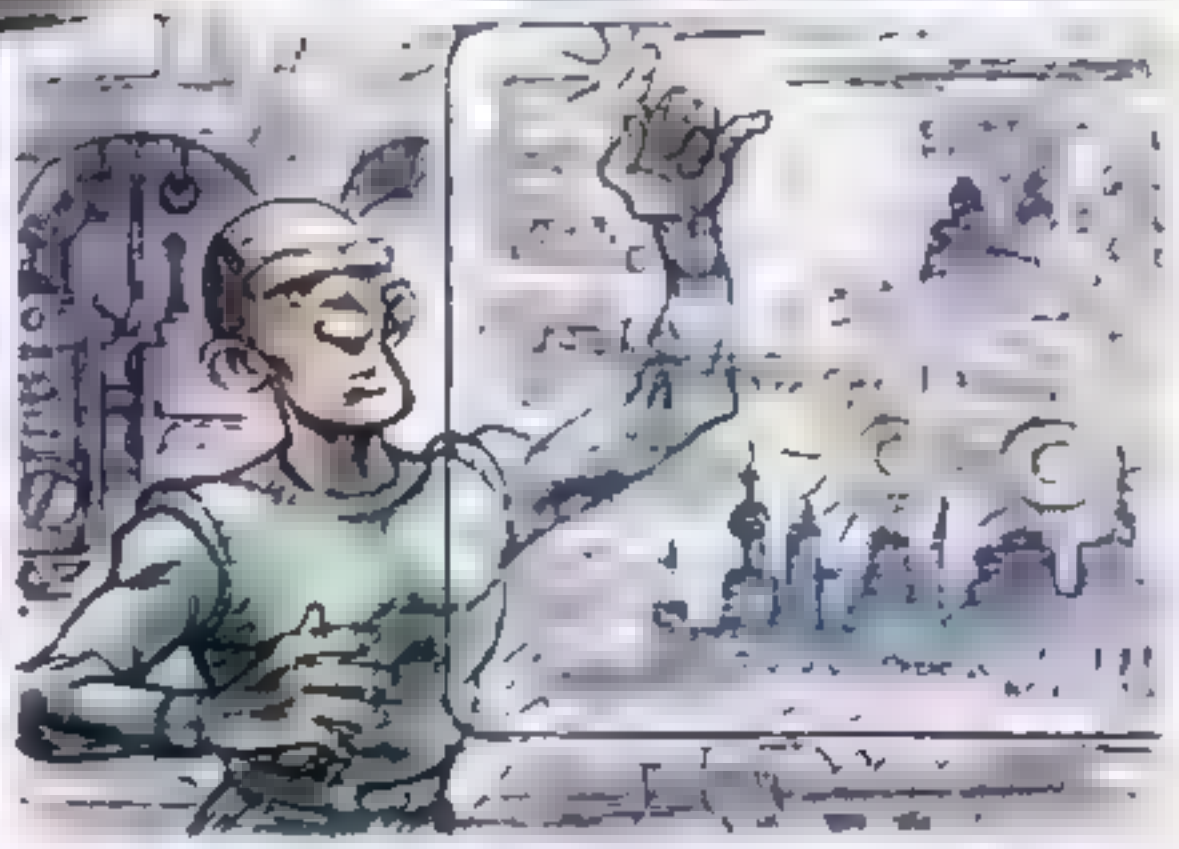
"OPERATION
RAGNAROK
WAS COMPLETED
SUCCESSFULLY."

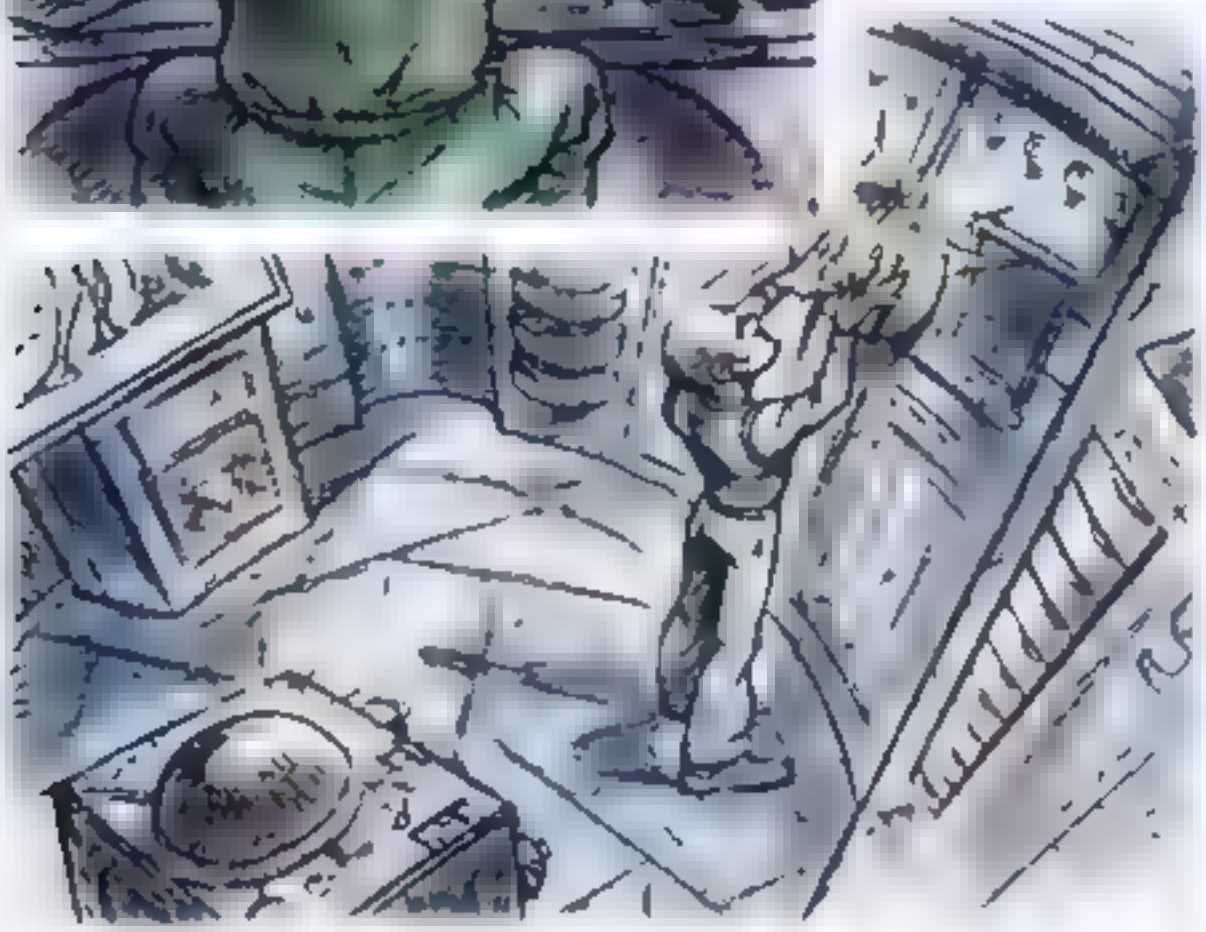
THE END.

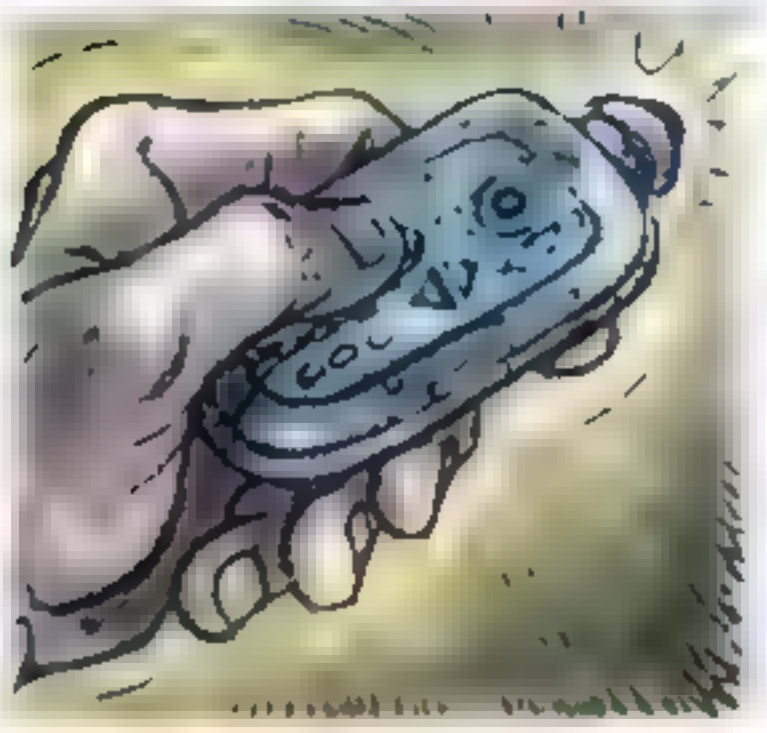
the AGE

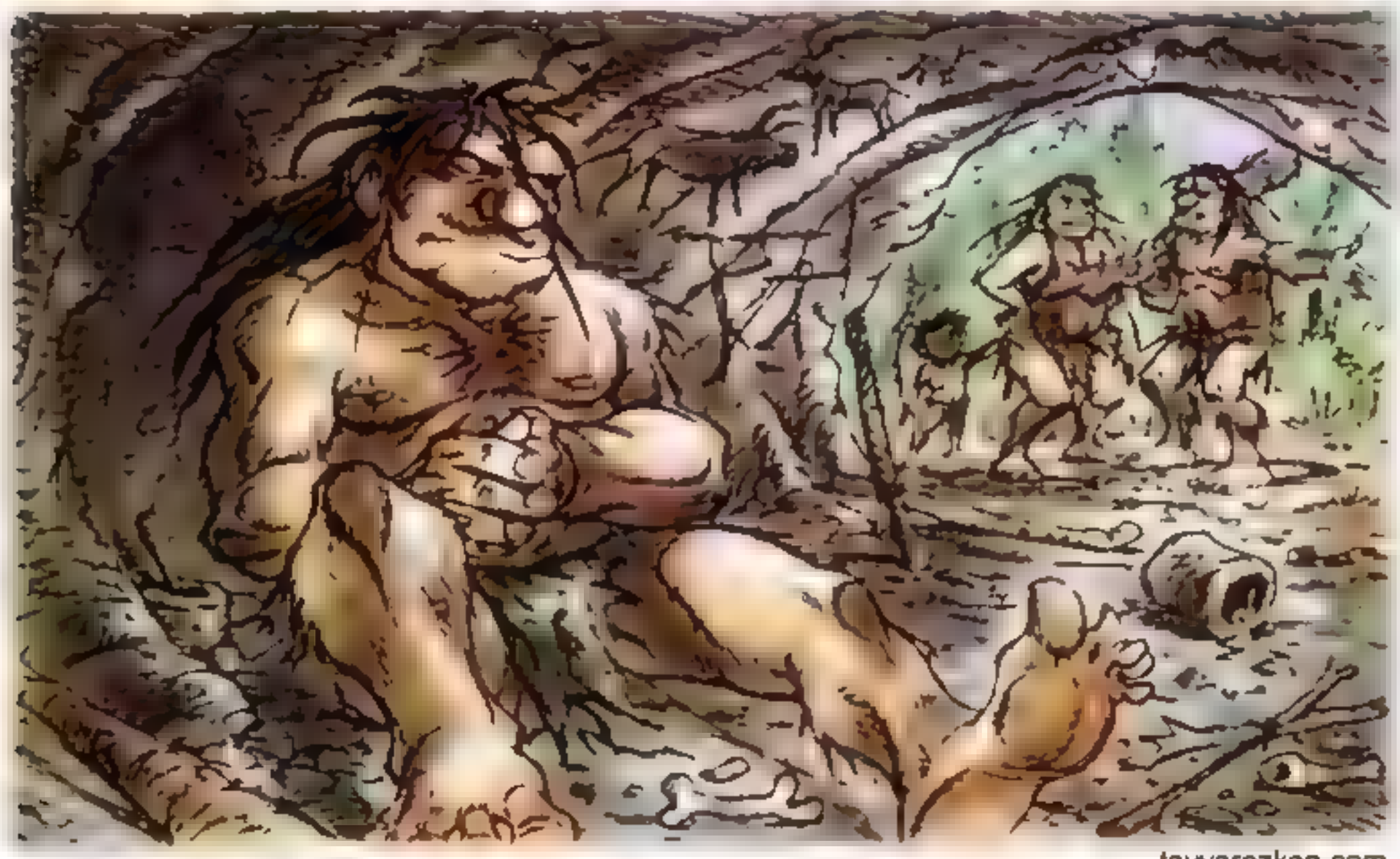












tayyarozkan.com

ARTIST'S STUDIO

ALICIA HOLLINGER

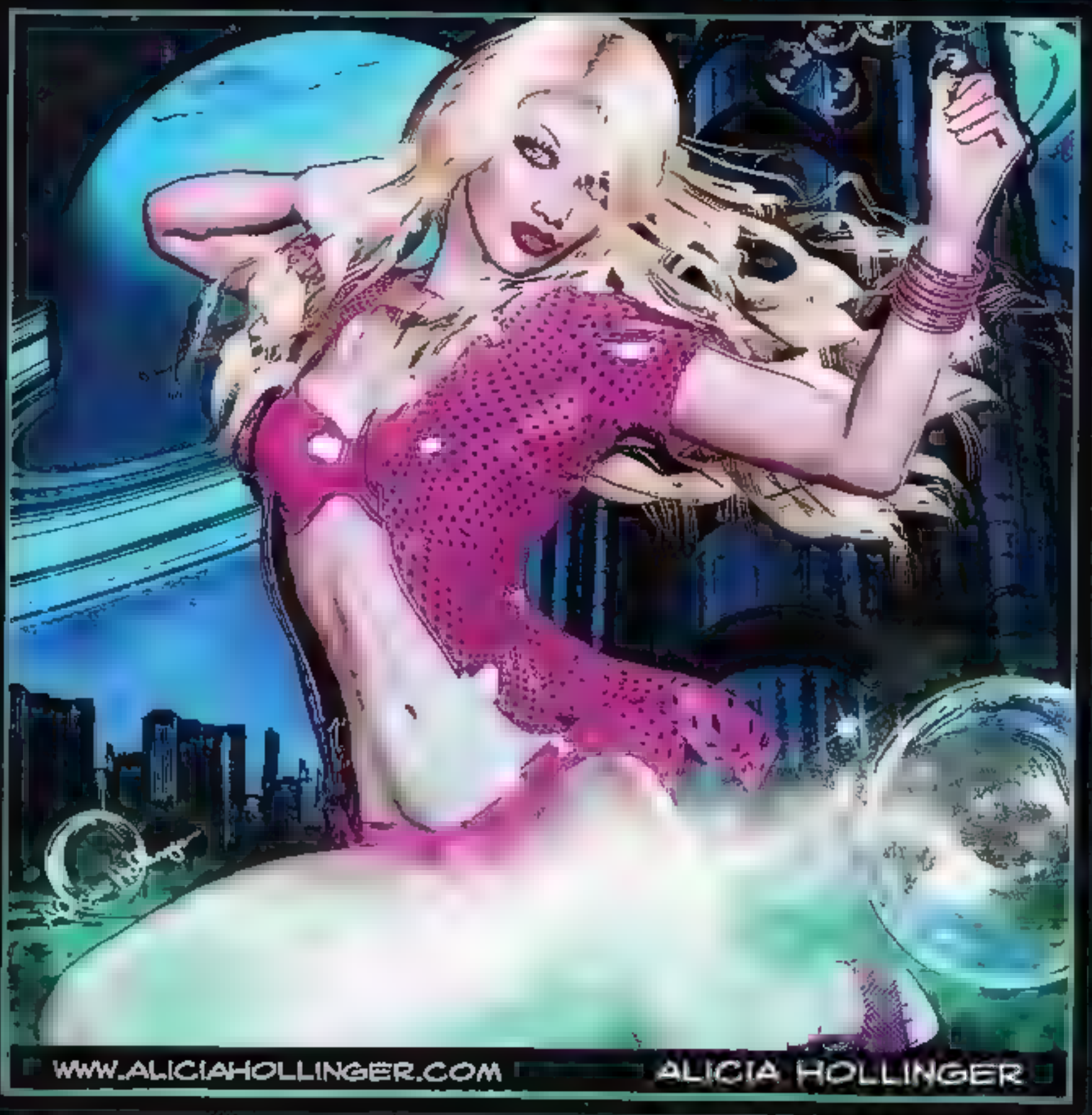
Alicia Hollinger is a Los Angeles-based digital artist and writer. Her first in a series of pin-up art books, ***Alicia's Pin-Ups: Sci-Fi, Fantasy, & Girlicious Pin-Up Art: The Art of Alicia Hollinger (Volume 1)***, has just been published and is available at Amazon.com (http://amzn.to/1dEvjGy). Prints of her art are also available in collector sizes including large canvas at: http://alicia-hollinger.artistwebsites.com

As a female pin-up artist, Alicia likes to create beautiful women, like Victoria's Secret models or "Charlie's Angels," that girls want to be and guys want to be with, so her art can be enjoyed by both men and women. Alicia's art focuses on sexy pop culture pin-up art, sci-fi, fantasy, comic book, video game, artistic, toon and realistic beautiful women, as well as children's art and sci-fi scenic art.

As a follow-up to her first volume of pin-up art on Amazon, she is now working on Volume 2, a sci-fi pin-up book entitled ***Cheesecake Galactica***. She will also be releasing small collections of niche art available for Kindle and free for those with a Prime membership to borrow. Alicia is also working on a pin-up digital comic book, a novelization of her sci-fi/paranormal screenplay and a sci-fi transmedia project/comic book in early development titled ***QUANTUM PARTY GIRLS*** (http://www.QuantumPartyGirls.com)

In her spare time, Alicia also works as an entertainment reporter, writing for online magazines, and doing celebrity and red-carpet interviews. In addition, she now publishes her own online magazine, ***Pop Culture Today*** (http://www.popculturetoday.us)

Alicia finds it rather ironic that she is now creating sexy pin-up art. When she first moved to LA from NYC, she was offended when, despite her advanced education, she was treated like an air-head sex object by lecherous older wealthy men and phony or sleazy film producers. She attended Playboy Mansion parties out of curiosity, but quickly realized that being a bimbo sex object with a boob job and collagen lips was not something she aspired to become. In the pin-ups she now creates, she infuses a sense of intelligence behind the eyes of the girls, sometimes a bit of a tease or kickass attitude. There is more to them than simple T&A, there is a brain and personality in there, and



she is pleased to discover that most men find that sexy.

Her interest in sci-fi and fantasy began as a very small child. Ever since she was a baby in her crib, Alicia has had "lucid dreams," which allowed her to be aware that she was dreaming while she was dreaming. It seemed her consciousness could travel to these alternate worlds at night while she was completely aware that her body was actually asleep in her bed, allowing her to easily move back and forth between these two "realities." This later sparked an interest in theoretical quantum physics, consciousness, the brain, and sci-fi that is, with further study, starting to become "sci-fact." Alicia's dreams have had a huge affect on the way she perceives the world. Her father would often admonish her for living in a "dreamworld." Luckily, living in a dreamworld is a good thing for art and writing, not so good if she had decided to become an accountant or a lawyer.

Although Alicia originally strived to be an actress, she refused to give in to Hollywood exploitation and casting couch situations. She ended up working as an executive in film acquisitions, development, marketing, and distribution. She taught herself Photoshop and volunteered to create movie posters and ads for the company she worked for, discovering she liked that better than her actual job -- except for the part where she got to attend international film festivals, red carpet premieres, and amazing parties in Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and Milan, and being seated next to Johnny Depp at a Cannes Film Festival dinner party...

As a child, Alicia loved drawing her own paper dolls and as an adult, this moved to the computer, where she began creating beautiful women with high fashion looks inspired by the huge glamorous billboards around the Sunset Strip area, high fashion magazines and Tyra Bank's TV show "America's Next Top Model." But everything changed when one day in 2009, a colleague saw her art and suggested she go to Comic-Con in San Diego.

"What's that?" she asked.

"It ended up being something that changed my life," says Alicia. "I went into Comic-Con day one, a jaded Hollywood/NYC self-professed over-educated party-girl to discover, after four days of immer-

Continued on page 80

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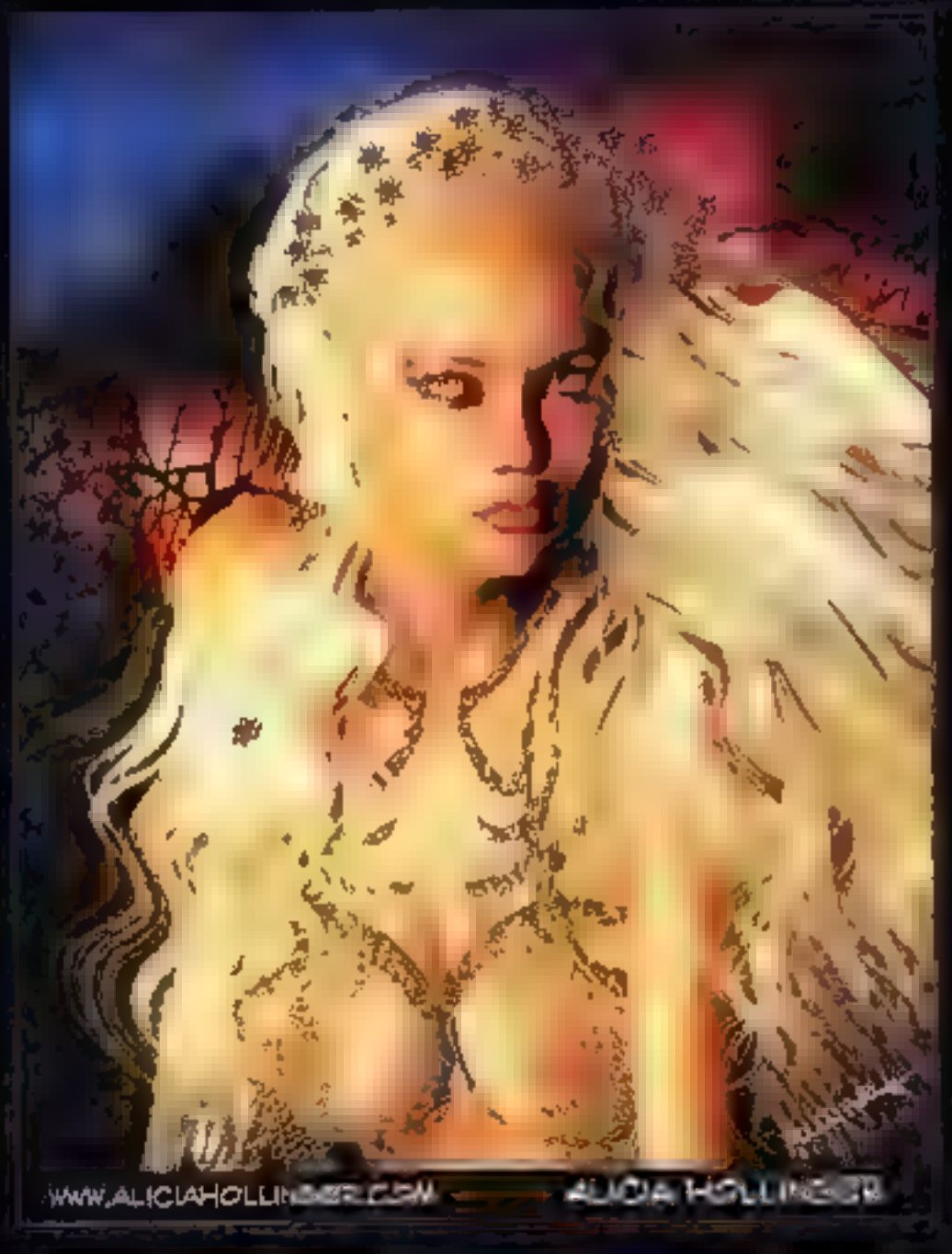


sion in this strange new land, that I emerged – a geek! While standing in a ridiculous line in front of a mock-up of a Stargate from "Stargate SG-1" (which I had just started watching the year the series ended and went into syndication) waiting with all the Stargate fans, something happened. The years of Hollywood jadedness began to lift and while staring into the epicenter of that Stargate mock-up, feeling almost as if I were in line to go through an actual wormhole, I felt a sudden affinity with those around me. I suddenly GOT IT, I understood geekdom! It wasn't about those nerds in school who covered their work during tests in fear you may copy off them, it was about embracing otherworldly possibilities and immersing yourself in imaginary universes with imaginary people who are beyond mere mortals."

So, she says, it was right there at the Stargate booth at Comic-Con that her whole life changed. She started embracing geekdom. Her favorite TV shows became "Stargate SG-1," "Battlestar Galactica," "Firefly," "Eureka," and then "Continuum," and her motto came to be the SYFY Channel's corporate slogan "Imagine Greater."

"So, basically, I drank of the Comic-Con Kool-Aid, and mixed it with my existing Hollywood world of parties filled with *Playboy* and *Maxim* models and it turned into the sci-fi, fantasy and 'girlicious' pin-ups of today and my concept for ***QUANTUM PARTY GIRLS***."

Alicia has shown her art at Petra Gallery in Beverly Hills, Meltdown Comics Gallery in Hollywood, Pixeldrip Gallery events, Nucleus Gallery in Los Angeles, Titmouse Studios Hollywood, L.A.'s Comic Book Sunday, pop-up store galleries in LA, Long Beach Comic-Con, Wondercon, Condor-Con, LA Horror Fest, L.A's Pop-Con and Stan Lee's Comikaze, and her work has been featured in a book published by Heavy Metal.

Please follow Alicia on Twitter and Facebook to keep up with her new works:

FACEBOOK: https://www.facebook.com/AliciaHollingerArt

TWITTER: http://www.twitter.com/AliciaHollinger (@AliciaHollinger)

BUY PRINTS: http://alicia-hollinger.artistwebsites.com

BUY BOOKS: http://amzn.to/1dEvjGy

WEBSITE: http://www.AliciaHollinger.com

Heaven's Inferno

Script: Scott O. Brown
Art: Ferran Xalabarder

SON...?

OH, SHIDDO...

OPEN, DAMN YOU! OPEN!

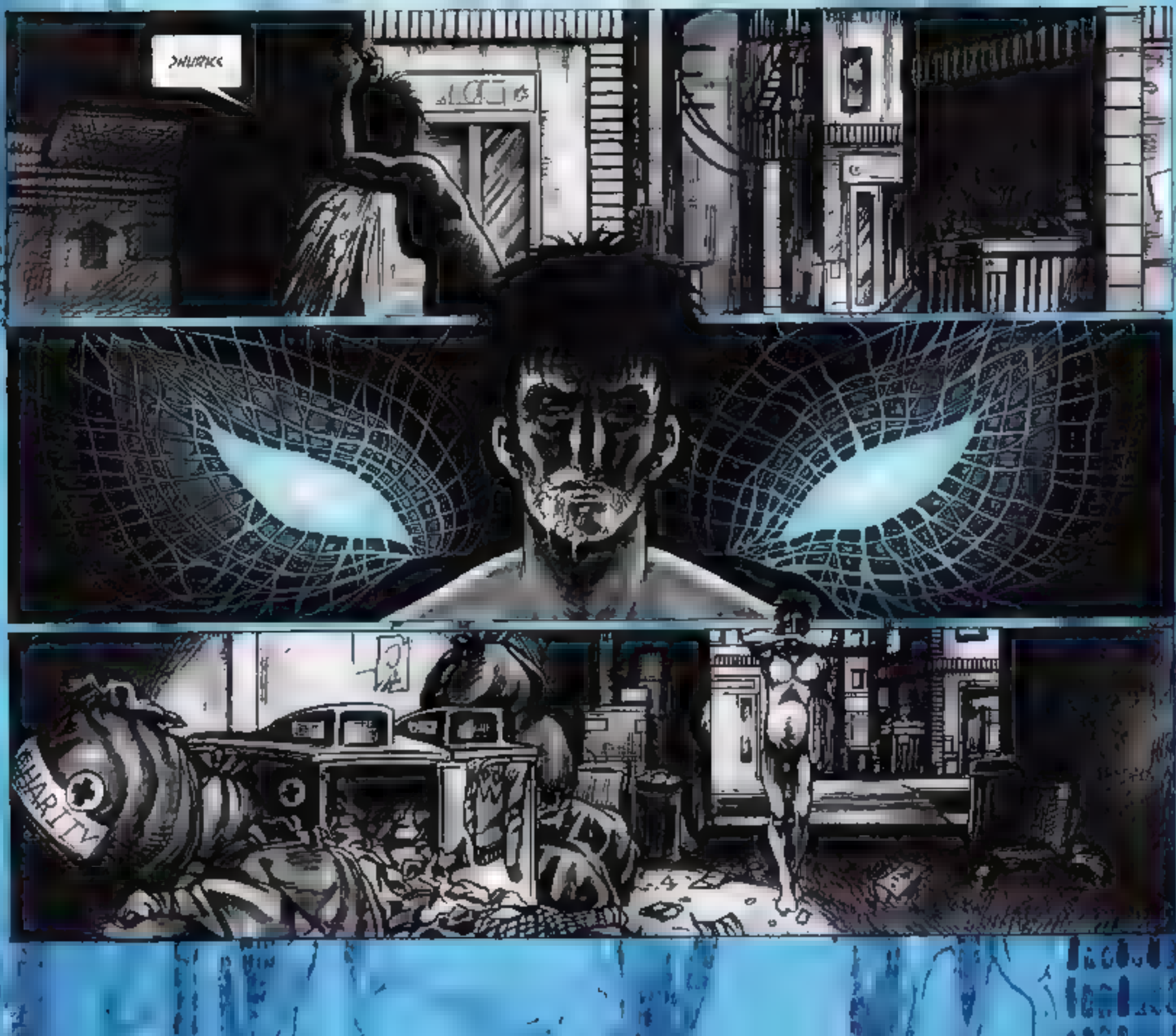
"CHILDREGS. I HAVE TO FIND CHILDREGS. HE'LL KNOW HOW TO OPEN IT AGAIN..."

...SO HUNGRY.

THE... THE INSIDE... OF EVERYTHING ALL AT ONCE.

"HOW COULD I HAVE LOST HIM?"

SHUSHHH



PAWN-JOE

OPEN

PLEASE COME BACK SOON

NO PASAR

THAT'S OKAY I DON'T SEE WHAT I NEED

I GOT MORE THAN WHAT'S OUT HERE-

JUST A SEC.

MERDA!

MARIA! GET THE TAPES AND CALL PEREZ IT HAPPENED AGAIN.

QUEP

NO TEMA.

RIGHT TO LIFE!

RIGHT TO LIFE!

BABY KILLERS!!!

SIR! WE'RE LOOKING FOR SUPPORTERS FOR OUR PETITION TO SHUT DOWN THIS MURDER HOUSE.

BACK OFF.

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IN A CHILD'S RIGHT TO LIVE?

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN SENT TO HEAVEN BEFORE THEY EVER HAD A CHANCE TO LIVE? DON'T THEY DESERVE LIFE?

LEAVE ME BE.

SIGN THE PETITION, PLEASE THERE ARE TOO MANY BABIES IN HEAVEN!

THERE *ARE* NO BABIES THERE..

..ONLY HORRIBLE THINGS.

CHILDRESS!

TELL ME HOW TO OPEN IT AGAIN!

JACKSON?

DID YOU FIND YOUR... OH...

HOW DO I OPEN IT AGAIN? IS THERE A KEY? A PASSWORD?

PLEASE, I DON'T... I CAN'T-

YOU *KNEW*, DIDN'T YOU? SOMETHING GRABBED MY BOY. I NEED TO GET HIM BACK. HE'S IN THERE *ALIVE*.

THAT... THAT WAS GOD'S WILL. HE BRINGS ALL HIS CHILDREN HOME.

SIDNEY IS MY CHILD. NOT HIM.

THE ONLY OTHER DOOR IS DEATH.

THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO FIRST.

THEY'LL FIND YOU, JACKSON!

THEY'LL FIND YOU AND RIP YOU APART.

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN...

HOLLOWED BE THY

FEAR NOT

WEE-OOO WEE-OOO

SIR, STEP TOWARDS THE CAR, PLEASE

I NEED YOU TO PLACE YOUR HANDS ON THE VEHICLE

WHAT'S GOING ON?

ARE YOU ARMED?

THERE'S A PISTOL IN MY LEFT POCKET.

PERMIT?

SHIT... NO NO PERMIT.

YOU REALIZE I HAVE TO TAKE YOU IN, RIGHT? AND AFTER I DO, I HAVE A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT.

ANYTHING YOU SAY CAN AND WILL BE USED AGAINST YOU.

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT I TAKE UNLICENSED FIREARM POSSESSION VERY SERIOUSLY

Abortion kills!

ESPECIALLY WHEN PAWNSHOP OWNERS ARE FOUND IN PIECES ON THE SIDEWALK

LIKE THAT?

EXACTLY LIKE THAT! DID YOU SEE ANYTHING?

I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING, AND I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.

YOU GOTTA LET ME GO

POLICE

"I NEED TO GET HIM BACK. I CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES."

NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'M TRYING TO FIND MY SON.

WITH A STOLEN HANDGUN?

WE HAVE TO GO BACK!

IF SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO YOUR SON, YOU CAN FILE A REPORT WHEN WE GET TO THE PRECINCT.

NOW!

IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT YOU HAVE A GUN STOLEN FROM A PAWNSHOP WITH A DEAD PROPRIETOR.

YOU HAVE TO LET ME OUT!

THE DOOR IS OPEN!

NOT THIS ONE.

LOOK, MOST KIDS YOUR SON'S AGE, THEY'RE JUST BLOWING OFF STEAM.

YOU NEED TO GIVE IT A REST. COOL IT OFF TONIGHT. IF HE DOESN'T SHOW UP IN THIRTY-SIX HOURS, YOU CAN FILE MISSING PERSONS.

NOT LIKE *YOU'RE* GOING ANYWHERE.

THE DOOR COULD CLOSE BY THEN!

JUST RELAX, DON'T MAKE THIS TAKE ANY LONGER FOR EITHER OF US.

CHRIST. AGAIN?

FEAR NOT.

NO.. NOT HERE..

THE F.UCK IS *THAT* !?

BLAM!

GET DOWN! *GET DOWN!*

BLAM!

AIEEEE!!!

BLAM!

NOOO--
-HURK-

DO NOT BE AFRAID.

YOU SHOULD BE

SO, A SERAPH? THEN YOU GET BUCKSHOT.

NO, NOT TODAY. NO LAWS WERE BROKEN. YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS IN THE *DIVINE*.

BOOM

HERE, YOU ANSWER TO ME, NOT GOD.

KYRIE ELESIO-

BOOM

NO MERCY. NOT TODAY.

YOU! DID YOU COME THROUGH THE DOOR?

YES. THE ONE IN THAT BUILDING. I DID' DO YOU...

WHAT DID YOU THINK YOU WERE DOING?

WE WERE TRYING TO FIND HIS MOTHER.

CAN YOU HELP ME OPEN THE DOOR?

IS SHE ALIVE?

NO.

HM?

HE'S ALIVE.

GOOD JUST ONE THEN.

MY GOD, THEY DIDN'T... YOU DON'T THINK IT DID THIS TO SIDDOP

NO, THE GERDPHS ARE THE LEAST OF HIS WORRIES.

REMEMBER ELIJAH?

FROM THE BIBLE?

HM. DANTE'S BEATRICE, ALL THE OTHERS. THEY'RE IN THERE, TOO ALIVE

SO, THERE'S A CHANCE MY SON'S ALIVE, TOO?

AND IT'S POSSIBLE HE'S GOING TO BE ALIVE FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

BUT IF YOU DO EXACTLY WHAT I SAY, I CAN HELP YOU GET HIM OUT IN ONE PIECE.

THE *AFTER* IS FOR THE DEAD, NOT THE LIVING. GET IN.

YOU AVOID THEM.

SERAPHS ARE MANAGEABLE. THEY'LL LEAVE YOU BE IF YOU LEAVE THEM BE. EVEN THE ARCHANGELS CAN BE REASONED WITH.

WHY?

BUT THE OPHANS, THEY'RE LIKE WHEELS WITH EYES. YOU NEED TO AVOID THEM.

SO WHAT DO I DO? EVERYTHING... JUST DISSOLVES IN THERE. HOW DO I FIGHT THEM OFF?

YOU DON'T FIGHT ANGELS ON THEIR TURF.

THEY'LL BRING YOU BACK THE LONG WAY.

IF YOU FIND YOUR SON, YOU HAVE TO BE CLEVER TO SAVE HIM...

...AND REVERENT. IT HELPS.

YOU'VE DONE THIS BEFORE?

ONCE. I GOT LUCKY. YOU AND YOUR SON MIGHT, TOO.

BUT YOU *MUST* FORGET THE DEAD YOU ARE THERE FOR THE LIVING. THAT FOCUS WILL HELP YOU.

HERE.

YOU'RE GOING TO NEED THIS.

BE CAREF... IT'S NO... ACTUA... A SWO...

THE "SWORD" WILL LOOK "NORMAL" IN THE *AFTER*. DON'T ACT IN VIOLENCE. IT WILL PROTECT YOU FROM MOST ANGELS. THEY ARE DIVINE. NOT SMART.

KEEP YOUR EYES OUT OF FOCUS, LIKE A 3-D TRICK. THE GEOMETRY WILL MAKE MORE SENSE.

AND DON'T LOOK BACK.

THANK YOU.

DON'T THANK ME CLEAN UP YOUR SHIT.

WHA--!?

I SACRIFICE UNTO MITHRA, SLEEPLESS, AND EVER AWAKE, WHO TAKES OUT OF DISTRESS THE MAN WHO DOES NOT LIE UNTO HIM, WHO DELIVERS HIM OUT OF DEATH.

"I PROMISED I'D BRING HER BACK."

"I PROMISED I'D BRING HIM BACK."

"BUT WHAT IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE?"

"WHAT IF I CAN'T SAVE EITHER OF THEM?"

"WHAT IF I DO, BUT CAN'T FIND MY WAY OUT?"

"THERE HAS TO BE MORE TO THIS. MAYBE I COULD BRING SOMETHING BACK WITH ME."

"I HAVE TO STAY FOCUSSED. MY SON. MY WIFE."

"I CAN BRING THEM BOTH BACK. RAISE MY SON. MAKE LOVE TO MY AMAYA AGAIN."

"ALL THE WAYS WE LOVED BEFORE."

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS. THIS PLACE IS INSIDE MY HEAD. AND OUTSIDE."

"WHERE AM I? WHAT IS THIS PLACE... THAT SOUND..?"

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

MATH MAY PROVIDE YOU WITH BETTER GUIDANCE THAN THE WOMAN.

I WAS WITH HIM, BUT OF THE ASCENDING I WAS NOT CONSCIOUS--

HE PASSED THROUGH THE FIFTH SPHERE. THAT IS ALL I SAW

ALBERTUS! NO RIDDLES. SPEAK CLEARLY AND WITH RECONCILIATION.

HAVE YOU SEEN A YOUNG BOY, NINE YEARS OLD? HE'S MY SON.

INDEED WE ARE! PLEASE, WHAT BRINGS YOUR LIVING FLESH TO THE AFTER?

RAMAH?

MY NAME IS BEATRICE. I SAW YOU PASS THROUGH THE FIRST FOUR SPHERES.

OPEN YOUR EYES. THESE ARE THE WISEST OF MEN.

"GO, MUCH. GO, MUCH."

I SEE YOUR ENLIGHTENMENT IS STILL LIMITED TO MATHEMATICS.

MATH IS INFINITE, DEAR BEATRICE. YOU WERE BORN TOO SOON.

OR AT THE MOMENT I WAS NEEDED.

TAKE MY HAND, JACKSON. LET US LEAVE FEYNMAN TO HIS MATH.

HE MAY NEED SOME TIME.

NO PROBLEM IS TOO SMALL OR TOO TRIVIAL IF WE CAN REALLY DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

HOW DO YOU LIVE HERE? HOW MANY OTHERS ARE HERE?

WE ARE FEWER THAN THE STORIES, SURVIVING THROUGH GRACE AND RADIANCE AND MANNA.

I'M SORRY FOR ALL THE QUESTIONS. I JUST DON'T WANT THIS TO BE IN VAIN. NOT LIKE THE LAST TIME.

LAST TIME, YOU SOUGHT THE DEAD, DIDN'T YOU?

HAVE FAITH THAT YOUR SON IS STILL AMONG THE LIVING HERE, AND HE WILL BE

OTHERWISE, WHY CONTINUE?

WHEN WE TRIED BEFORE, TO FIND AMAYA, WE LOST ALL SENSE OF EVERYTHING, AND I FELL BACK OUT OF THE DOOR ALONE.

I COULDN'T LEAVE HIM HERE.

IF YOU LET YOUR FAITH CARRY YOU... IN HIM, IN YOUR ABILITY, IN WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO DRAW STRENGTH FROM... YOU WILL FIND HIM.

IN THE END, IT WILL BE ALL YOU HAVE.

"THEN I HOPE IT IS ENOUGH."

NO.

I'M IN CHARGE HERE

NO MORE

IF YOU ARE IN CHARGE, MAGON...

THEN WILL YOU PASS JUDGEMENT ON THE BRIDGE?

THE ONE AND SAME LIVING SOUL HAS BYPASSED THE CHINVAT AGAIN. THE AFTER SMELLS OF HIM, AS DO YOUR PRAYERS. WE HEAR HIS CRIES. HIS THOUGHTS SO CONFUSED.

WE CANNOT JUDGE THE LIVING. YOU WERE TASKED TO GUARD THE DOOR.

THERE'S A SECOND HE HAS ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

AH, YES, THE SMELL OF THE YOUTH. GAROSH KNOWS. IT DOES NOT ABDICATE YOU OF YOUR CHARGE. YOU KNOW THE CONSEQUENCES.

THIS WILL NOT END WELL, MASON. STEEL YOURSELF.

AND BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR ARMAMENTS...

...YOU MIGHT POKE AN EYE OUT.

MAY YOU NOT NEED TO CROSS THE CHIMPAT BEFORE YOUR DUTIES ARE DONE.

SON OF A BITCH.

WE DIDN'T SEE ANY PLACE LIKE THIS BEFORE.

THIS IS MAGG, AND THESE ARE THE WARRIORS OF THE FAITH.

SO MANY... HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND HIM HERE?

THIS IS THE *ARMY* OF GOD. FULL OF THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO DIED IN BATTLE FOR HIM.

ONLY GOD?

IN ANY OF HIS FORMS.

WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO WAR FOR?

NO WAR. ONLY A HEAVEN FULL OF WHAT THEY VALUED MOST IN LIFE IN DEFERENCE TO GOD.

THOUGH IF THE OCCASION ARISES...

DOWN THERE. THAT MAN. I KNOW HIM.

LT BAYLOR!

SWAT

DO I KNOW YOU?

WAIT, YEAH... YOU'RE THAT GUY I ARRESTED.

I'M SORRY. I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU.

IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. WHAT MATTERS IS YOUR HELP. I'M LOOKING FOR MY SON.

THERE ARE LOTS OF BOYS HERE. "CRUSADERS" WE CALL THEM. THEY TRAIN AT THE BASE OF ELYSIUM MONS.

IT'S DUE WEST, JUST OVER THE HORIZON.

AND YOU'RE SURE YOU SAW HIM...?

ARISE! WE SHALL REPEAT THE DRILLS.

NO. I'M NOT. THAT'S JUST WHERE WE TRAIN THE CHILDREN. THERE'S A WAR COMING.

LET'S GO.

AGAINST WHO?

WHO DO YOU THINK?

GOOD LUCK FINDING YOUR SON.

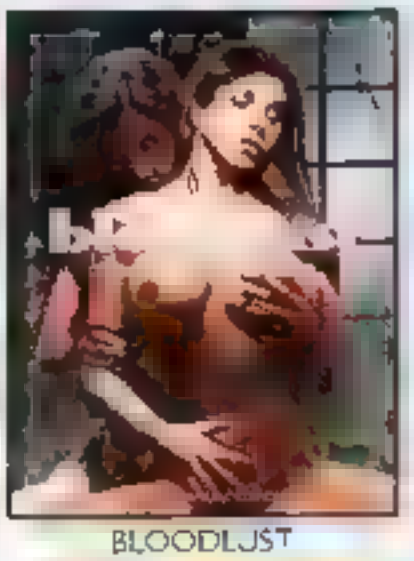
GALLERY GIRLS

ART COLLECTIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD CELEBRATING THE FEMALE FORMI EACH BOOK 64PGS BLACK & WHITE

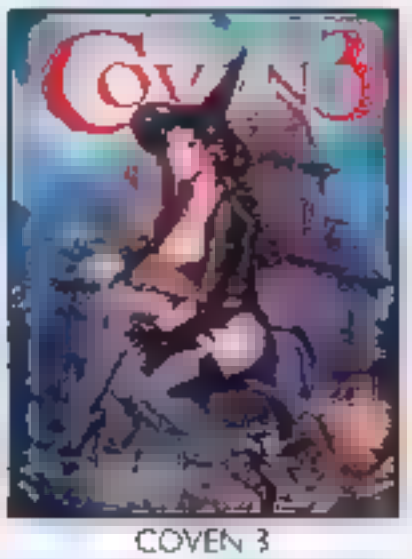
ANGEL LUST

ANGEL LUST 2

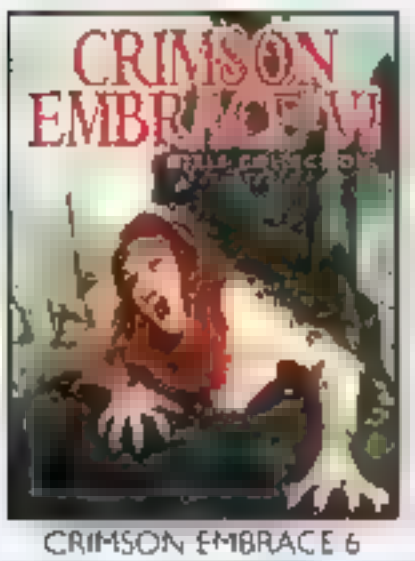
BOMBSHELLS



BLOODLUST

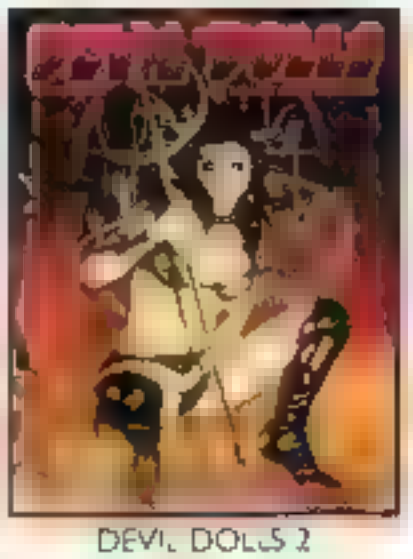


COVEN 3



CRIMSON EMBRACE 6

DEVIL DOLLS



DEVIL DOLLS 2

DRAGONTAILS 3

FAIRY TAILS 1

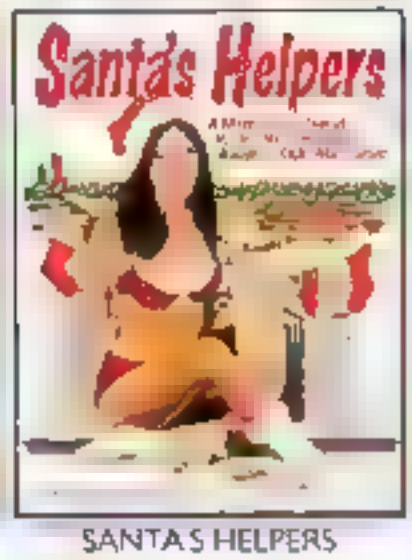
FAIRY TAILS 2

FURIOUS' ANGELS v DEVILS

G.IDDY UP!

MERMAIDS 3

MERMAIDS 4



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TREASURED CHESTS 4

WARRIOR QUEENS 2

WET & WILD!

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THE NAME OF THE CITY WAS AGOJO NACHE - ***WATER HAT*** IN THE NATIVE TONGUE - AND IT HAD QUICKLY FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF THE SPANIARDS, AS HAD ALL THE OTHER PROVINCES OF THE INCA EMPIRE.

ON THAT MORNING, DIEGO DE SURABAN WAS THINKING THAT THEY COULD NOT HAVE NAMED IT MORE APTLY.

BUILT ON THE SLOPES OF A MESA, AT THE SUMMIT OF WHICH LAY A LAKE OF THE SAME NAME. THE CITY AND LAKE HAD NAMED EACH OTHER.

SURABAN, THE SPANISH CAPTAIN AND LEADER OF THE EXPEDITION, STOOD IN FRONT OF HIS TENT, DEEP IN THOUGHT.

IT WAS SILENT AROUND HIM. HIS MEN WERE STILL ASLEEP, AND EVEN THE IMPRISONED INDIANS WERE STRANGELY SILENT TODAY.

HE HAD WOKEN EARLIER THAN WAS HIS WONT. MOVED BY A DISTURBING PREMONITION. HE FELT - OR RATHER KNEW, THAT SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT HE DIDN'T YET KNOW WHAT IT WAS.

HE LOOKED. SNIFFED. LISTENED CAREFULLY AND THEN AGAIN: THE SAME SENSATION.

IN THE SOUTHERLY AIR, THE CITY STILL LOOKED AS IT HAD WHEN HE'D FIRST SET EYES UPON IT. DAMP. GREYISH-GREEN. THE COLOR OF COPPER PATINA, WITH HEAVY CLOUDS HANGING OVER IT. MOTIONLESS.

WHAT HE WAS WAITING FOR APPEARED SILENTLY, YOU COULD EVEN SAY SHYLY BEHIND A TOWER.

IT WAS THE WHITE HORSE
IT CAME TO A STANDSTILL TEN METERS AWAY FROM HIM, ITS BLINDING WHITENESS REFLECTING OFF THE COBBLED WAY AND LOOKED AT HIM.

IT WAS A SUPERB ANIMAL. IDENTICAL TO THE HORSES IN PAINTINGS AT THE CITY HALL BACK IN ZARAGOZA. IT WAS IN NO WAY SIMILAR TO THE FOUR-LEGGED BEASTS THEY USED AS PACK ANIMALS. IT WASN'T ONE OF THEIRS. BUT NEITHER DID IT BELONG TO A LOCAL.

HE HAD ORDERED HIS MEN TO CATCH IT. BUT IT DISAPPEARED. GHOSTLIKE. BUT NOW, HERE IT WAS IN FRONT OF HIM, MOTIONLESS. LOOKING AT HIM AS OBEDIENTLY AS 17-YEAR-OLD-VIRGIN ON HER BRIDAL BED. HE APPROACHED MAKING A NOOSE WITH THE ROPE IN HIS HANDS.

WHEN HE CAME TO THIS NEW WORLD, HE BELIEVED HE HAD UNDERTAKEN THE JOURNEY TO ESTABLISH THE CROWN'S AUTHORITY IN NEW LANDS, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE LORD TO PAGANS, AND TO ACCUMULATE ENOUGH GOLD TO BUY LAND IN HIS OWN COUNTRY. BUT SEEING THIS REGAL ANIMAL, HE REALIZED THAT THIS WAS HIS LIFE'S PURPOSE. THE REASON HE HAD COME TO THE END OF THE WORLD.

AN EXPERT THROW. AND THE HORSE WAS TRAPPED BY THE NECK IN THE THICK ROPE.

AS IF IT HAD EXPECTED IT. THE ANIMAL TURNED AND BEGAN TO GALLOP MADLY

IT RAN AT A DIZZY SPEED. AND SURABAN FOUND HIMSELF BEING DRAGGED BEHIND IT ON THE WET PATHS, HIS ARMOR STRIKING SPARKS ON THE STONES.

HIS LEATHER TROUSERS TORE, AND EXPOSED HIS FLESH TO THE ROUGH GROUND. BUT HE CONTINUED TO HOLD TIGHTLY ONTO THE ROPE AS IF HYPNOTIZED.

THE HORSE RAN FASTER AND FASTER THROUGH THE CITY STREETS, AND A TRAIL OF BLOOD MARKED THE SPANIARD'S WAY

AS THE HORSE GALLOPED UPHILL ON THE CENTRAL STREET THAT LED TO THE LAKE, SURABAN INSTINCTIVELY REALIZED WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT HE DIDN'T LET GO OF THE ROPE THAT TIED HIM TO THE ANIMAL.

WHEN THEY REACHED THE SUMMIT AND THE HORSE PLUNGED INTO THE FROZEN WATERS OF THE LAKE...

ENTERING THE WATER, THE ANIMAL CONTINUED TO RUN ON THE LAKEBED, AS IF BUOYANCY DIDN'T EXIST, AND EVEN STRANGER, AS IF IT DIDN'T NEED AIR.

THE ONLY THING HE DID WAS TO TAKE THREE DEEP BREATHS AND HOLD ON TO THE ROPE EVEN TIGHTER.

BUT FIVE MINUTES UNDER WATER WERE FATAL, EVEN FOR SOMEONE AS HARD-BITTEN AS CAPTAIN SURABAN.

IN A DESPERATE EFFORT TO LATCH ON TO HIS BODY, HIS SOUL ENDED UP SWIRLING IN A CELL IN HIS ESOPHAGUS, AMONG THE BUBBLES OF HIS DEATH RATTLE.

IT WAS PERHAPS HIS RABID DESIRE TO MAINTAIN HIS EARTHLY EXISTENCE THAT PUSHED THE CELL TO DEVELOP INTO A PARODY OF LIFE. BECAUSE SUDDENLY SURABAN FOUND HIMSELF FLOATING IN THE SHAPE OF A HALF-FORMED SALAMANDER, A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY FROM HIS BODY.

AND THEN, AS HE FELT HIMSELF SHAKEN BY HIS DEAD BODY, HE UNDERSTOOD. IT WAS THE CELESTIAL AND CHTHONIC POWERS THAT WERE FIGHTING OVER HIS SOUL.

ALTHOUGH HE WAS A PATRIOT, A GOOD CATHOLIC, AND A FAMILY MAN, THE CRIMES HE HAD COMMITTED - ALBEIT AGAINST PAGAN NATIVES - WERE NOT FEW.

THE STRUGGLE FOR HIS SOUL LASTED SEVEN YEARS. THE ONLY THING HE COULD DO WAS WATCH AS HIS ROTTING FLESH WAS REPLACED BY THE SALT THAT FELL OVER HIS SKELETON.

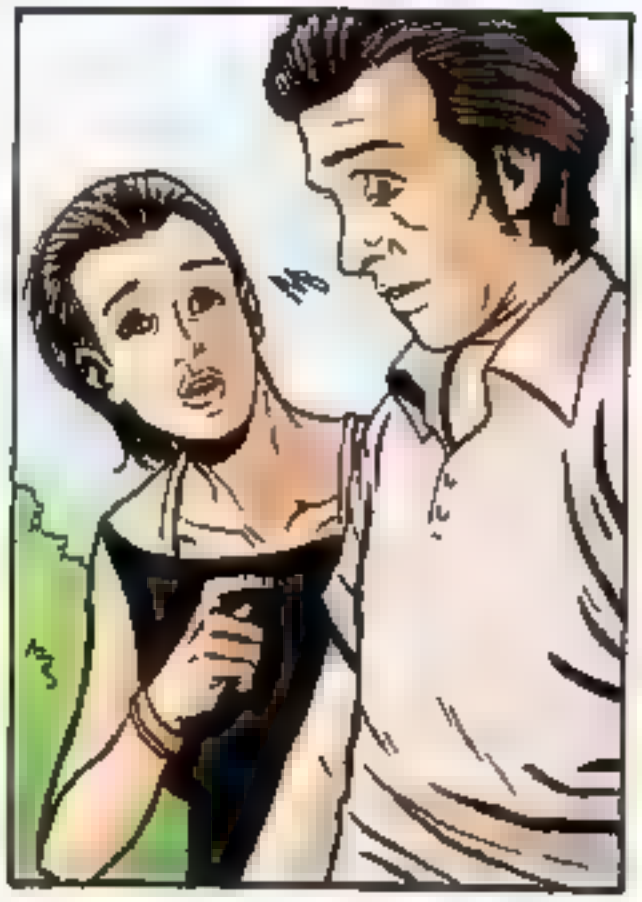
FINALLY, HE FELT THE SCALES REACH EQUILIBRIUM. NOT KNOWING WHICH SIDE HAD WON, HE GLANCED ONE LAST TIME AT HIS DECOMPOSED BODY AS HE WAITED FOR THE VERDICT.

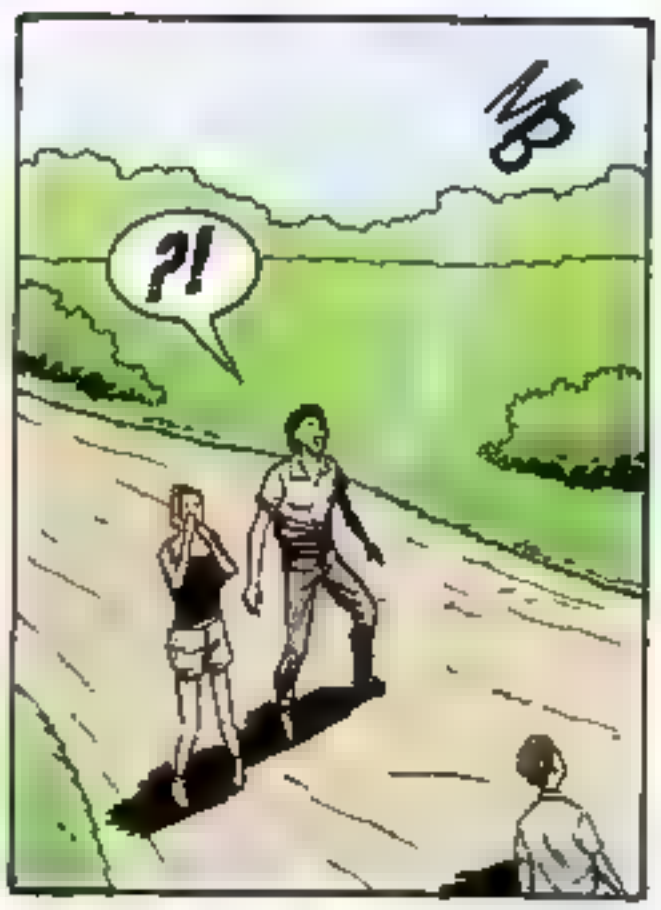
TERRIFIED, HE SAW THE EMPTY RECESSES IN HIS SKELETON COME ALIVE WITH A POISONOUS EMERALD LIGHT, A FORETASTE OF WHAT WAS TO COME.

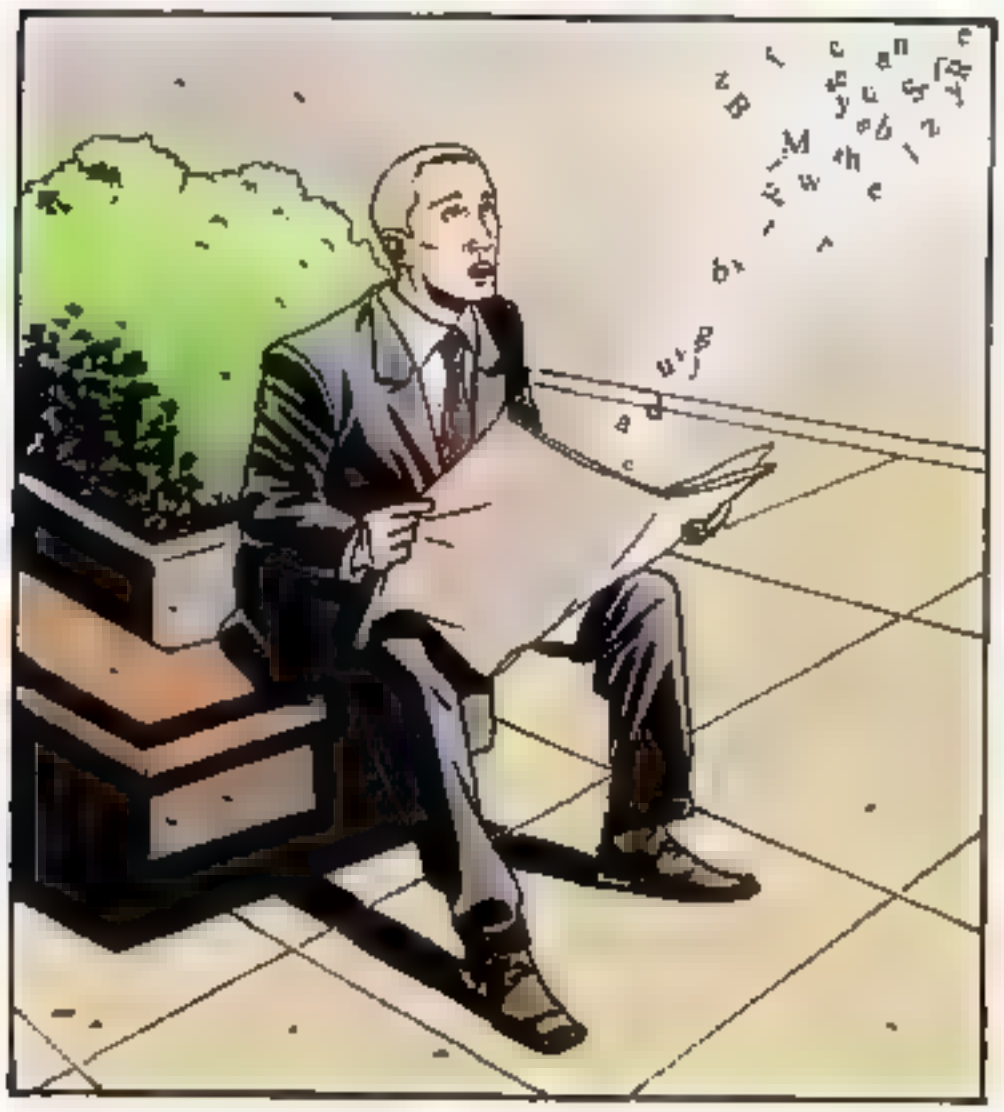
AND, AS IF HE HAD NEVER LET GO OF THE ROPE, HE FELT A VIOLENT TUG PULL HIM TO THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE, AND HE REALIZED - FOR THE FIRST TIME, THAT THE COLOR OF HELL... CONTRARY TO WHAT HE HAD BELIEVED... IS GREEN, NOT RED.

in the end was the Word

story and art by Mauro Balloni







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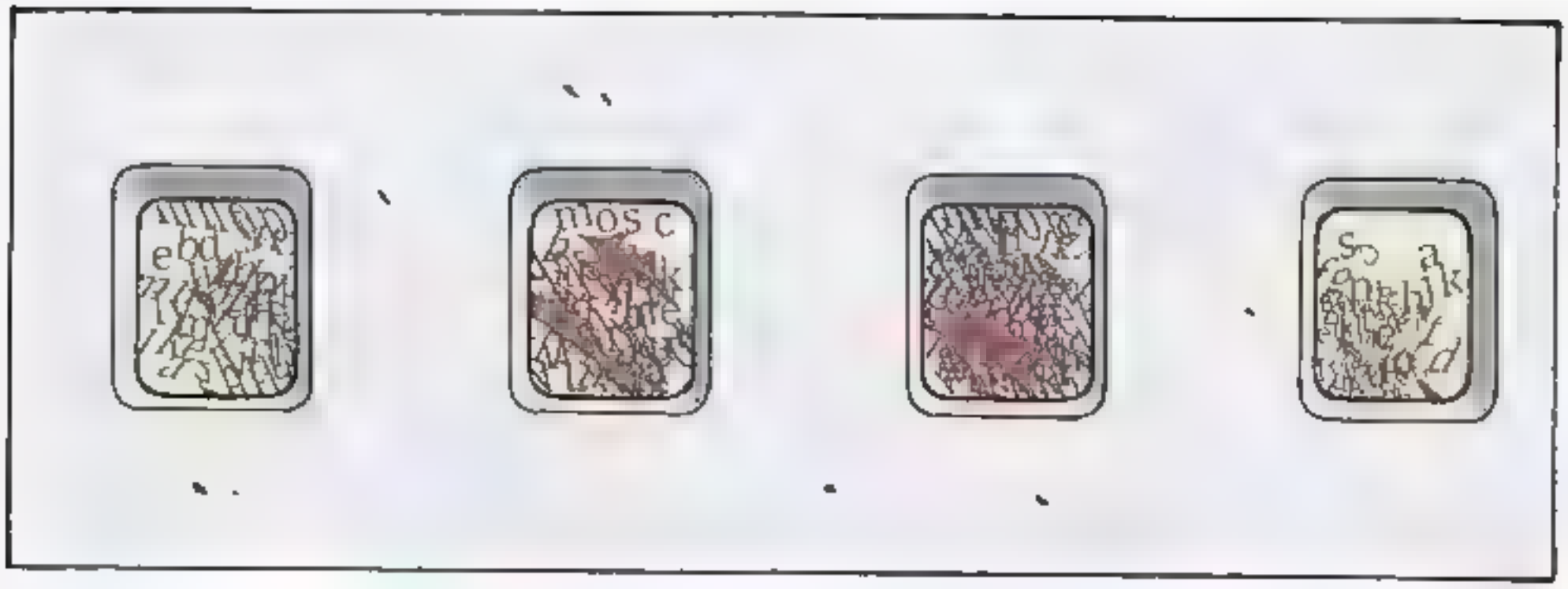

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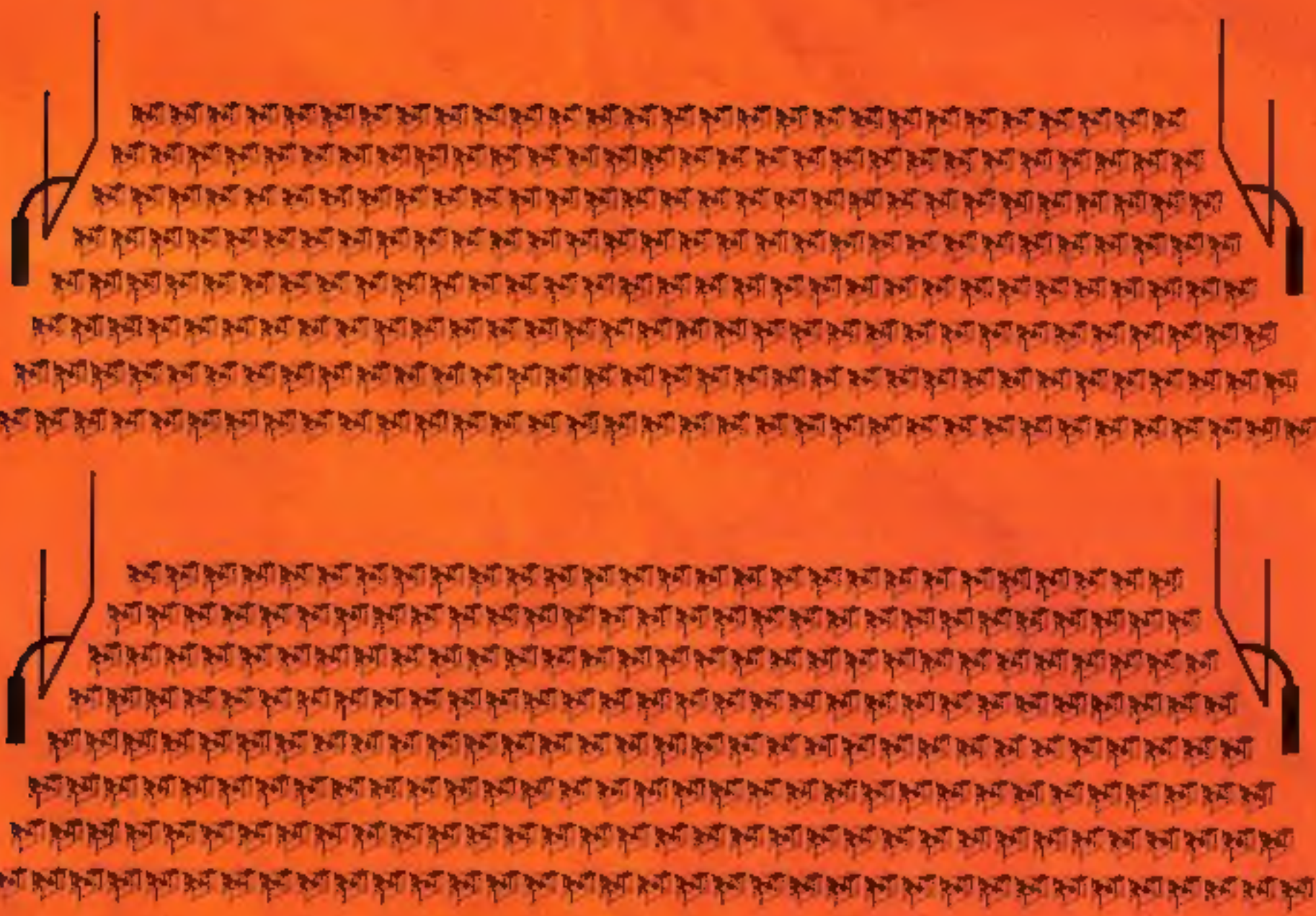

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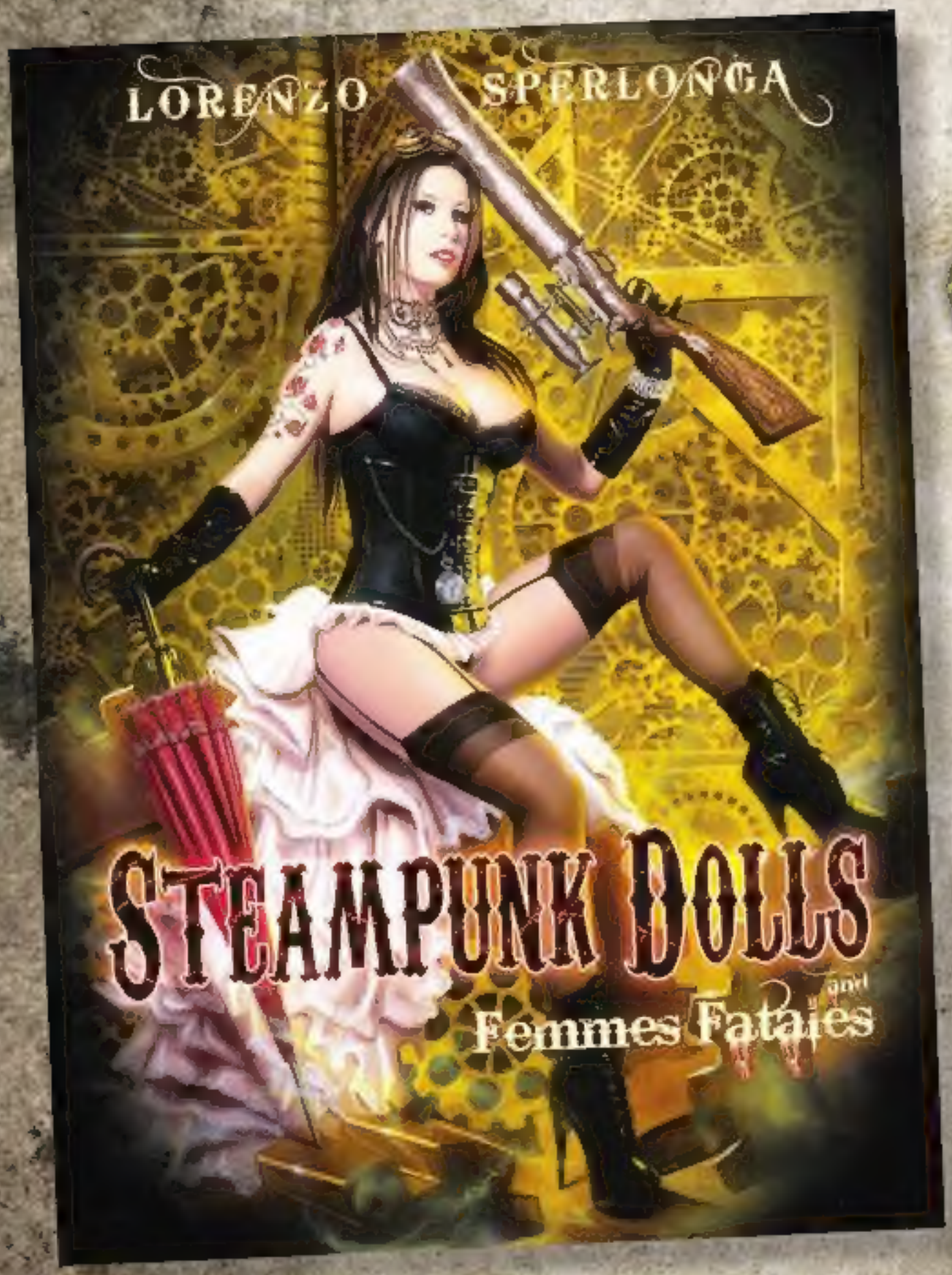

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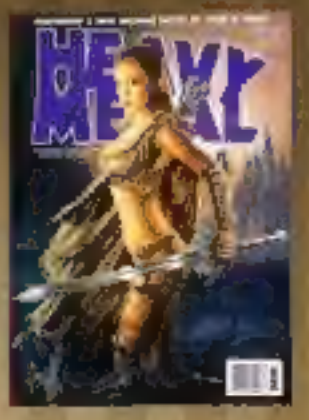

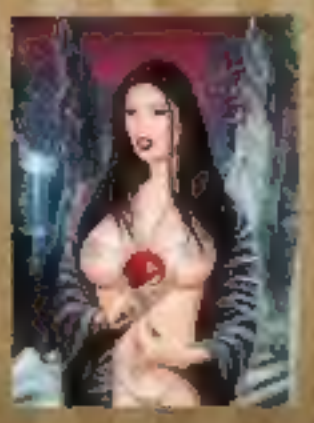

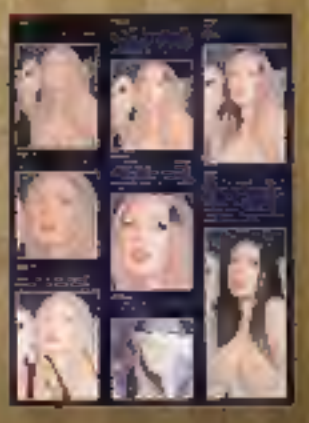

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